

「……私は、ライナのことが……
キファは少しだけ声に出して、そう言おうとして……



伝説の勇者の伝説 5

出来心の後始末

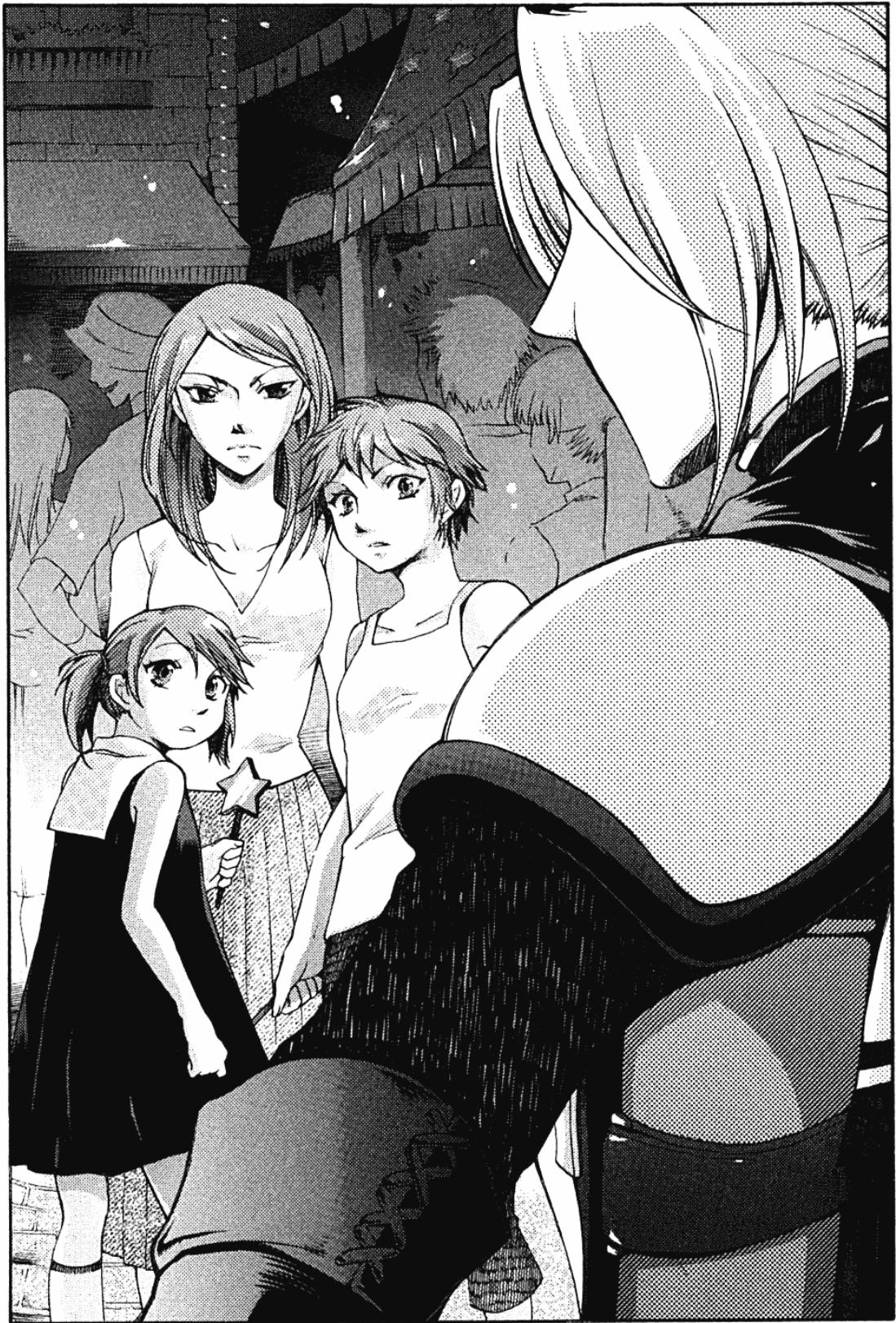


クウが凄まじい勢いで鎌を振り下ろす!

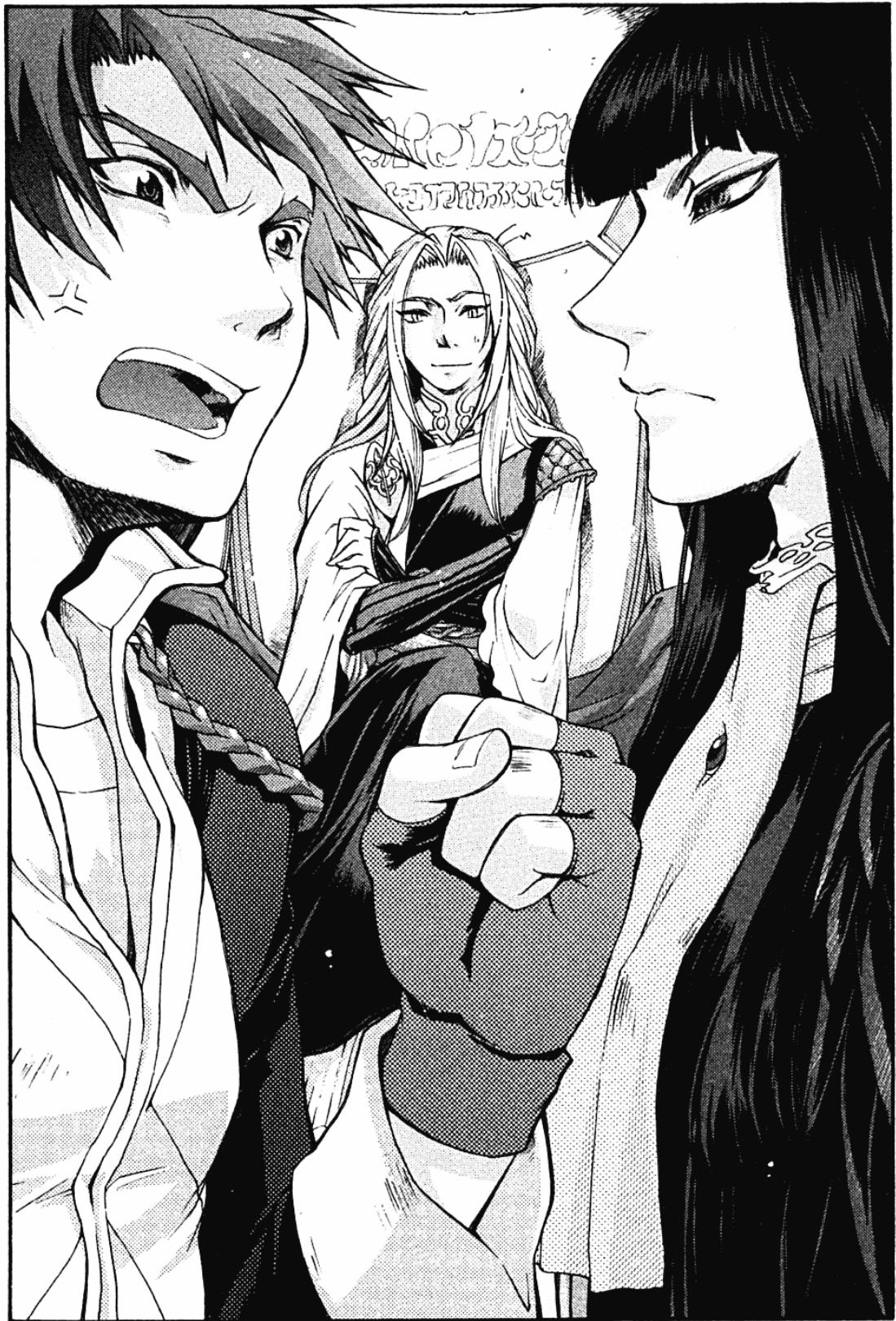
するとその瞬間――



竜の顎門あさとがククの頭に迫る！



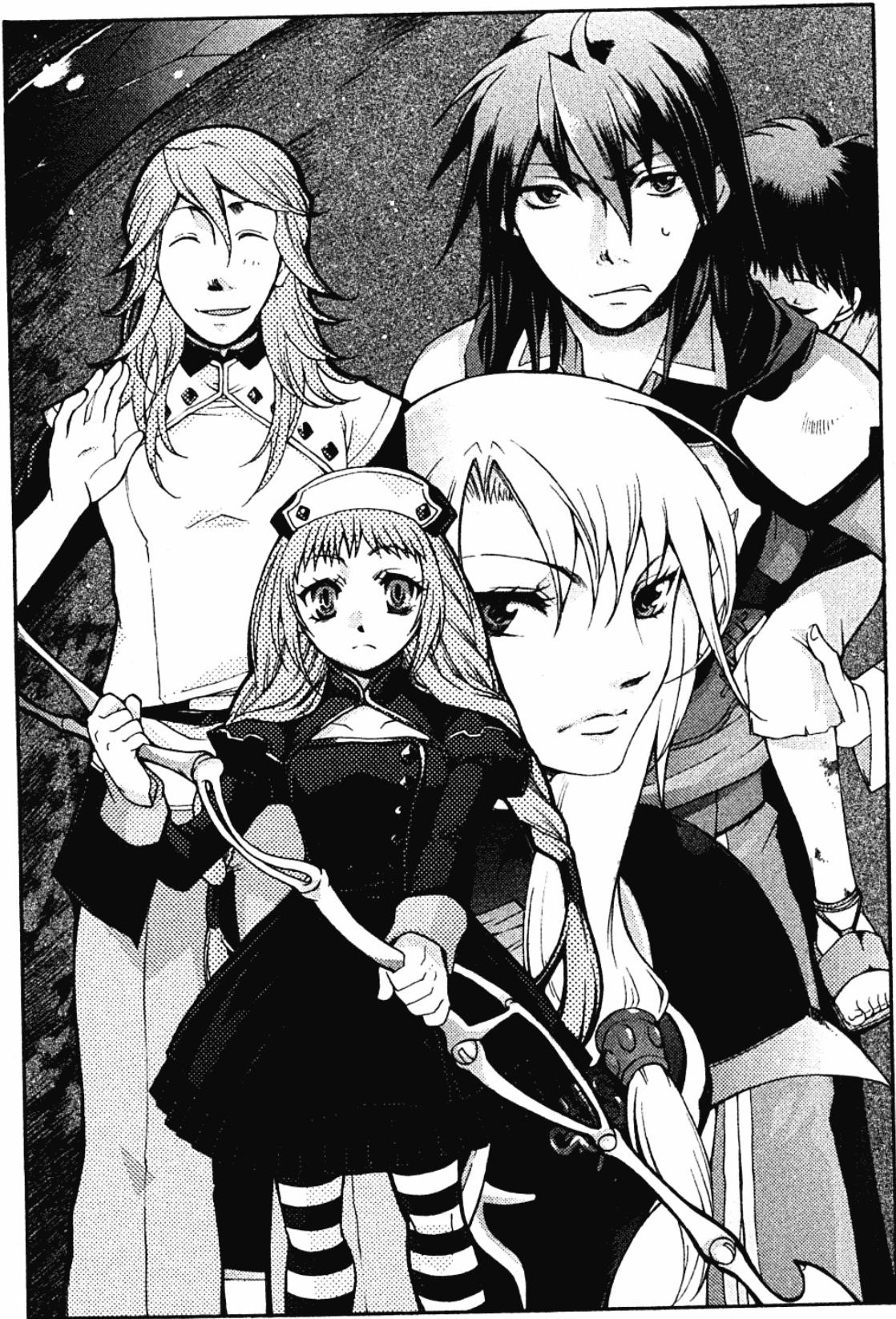




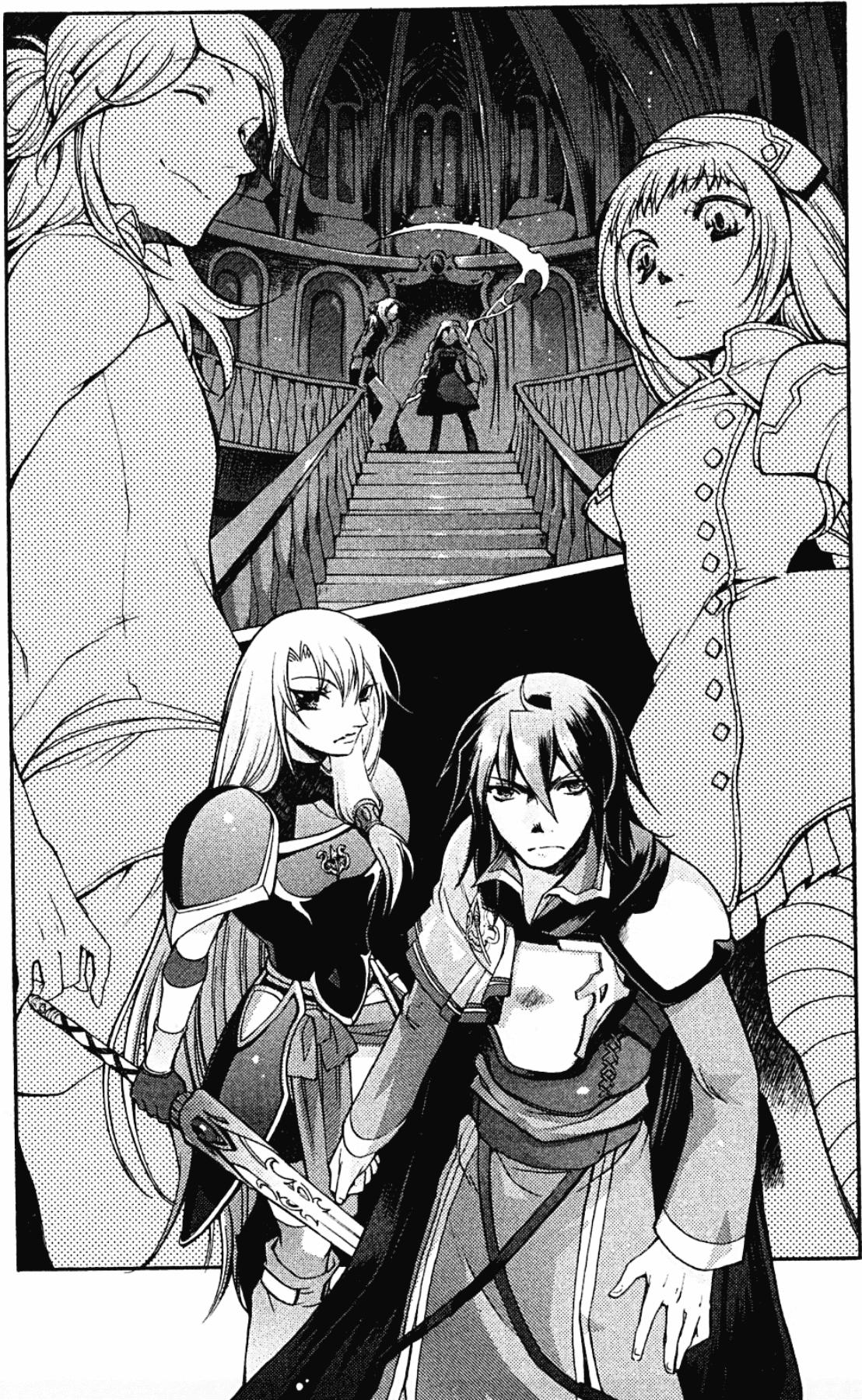












Prologue 1: Thinking Back on a Distant Past

In an empty classroom.

“...I love Ryner.”

Kiefer Knolles muttered softly, gently touching his head.

Such a small movement made her heart constrict, there was a faint sense of satisfaction.

But, he couldn't hear that.

They were in the classroom of the Roland Empire Royal Military Academy.

The morning lessons had ended, the afternoon lessons had ended too, the evening mock battle training was about to start, but...

After the morning lessons, he had slumped on the table and slept...

Kiefer sat by him.

“Really, Ryner you're too cunning. Seeing you sleep so peacefully... How can I bear to wake you up? We should be hurrying for the exercise now... If this continues, I'll be marked down as playing truant, and my marks will drop...”

Although she said that, she still looked at his adorable face with gentle eyes.

The rays passing through the window were starting to slant.

The red light rays shone on Ryner's black hair, making it tinged slightly red...

Kiefer thought, Ryner's hair colour was the same as her short red hair, she couldn't help but secretly feel pleased.

In the empty, quiet classroom.

There were only two of them in the classroom.

She muttered again:

“...To Ryner, I...”

Kiefer softly started to utter...

But, she stopped.

Because she knew, she was unable to let him know of her feelings.

Because she knew, she did not have that right.

She closed her eyes.

Thinking back...

One day, two years ago.

On that day, she smiled.

Perhaps this was the first time she laughed so happily since she left her birth country Estabul and entered the enemy country Roland as a spy.

Ever since she came to Roland, she had passed days with death near to her.

She sought information on the movements of Roland's army, then passed it on to Estabul.

Getting information on Roland and passing it on to Estabul.

It was revenge on Roland that had killed her parents.

It was to protect Estabul from being abused by Roland's magic hands.

In the beginning, twenty spies were sent here.

But, in that period of time, the only ones who survived without being exposed were her... and her sisters.

Her elder sister Naia and her younger sister Lymir.

Her sister Naia wasn't even twelve years old when their parents had been

murdered...

Ever since, the three sisters had survived together.

Comforting and supporting each other.

After that it was the same when the Estabul army took them away to be educated.

Even when they were sent to Roland to be spies...

They never left each other, living together.

The elder sister for the sake of protecting her younger sisters, and the younger sisters for the sake of supporting the elder sister worked hard desperately, they worked very, very hard...

It had been two years since they were sent to the enemy country Roland as sisters who had lost their parents.

They had fought madly to live.

They covered their real identities, gathered information about the Roland army, finding work so that they could survive...

So, only they had survived.

The Roland army seemed as if they had not locked down on them as of so far.

It seemed, they could still pretend that nothing was wrong.

They had thought.

So, that day, she smiled.

She was with her sisters Naia and Lymir had participated in a festival in the capital of Roland, Reylude...

They were looking at the stalls set by the side of the rows of streets as they

walked.

The three sisters looked alike, their heights were different, but they had the same red hair and energetic red eyes, beautiful features, and they had the same tastes in clothes.

Kiefer liked her own appearance, but her sister Naia who was older than her by three years was much more womanly and gentle.

Every time her sister walked on the streets, the men would watch her pass by, this made Kiefer feel proud.

Then Kiefer would look at her twelve-year old younger sister Lymir who was... two years younger than her and looked like her...

Lymir saw a stall owner selling sweets.

“Ne, Naia Onee-san, I want to eat that!”

Lymir said and ran off, Kiefer seeing that—

“Ah, wait, Lymir! You can’t do that! Didn’t you just eat sweets just now!”

“That wasn’t enough!”

“Saying that, you always eat sweets, you wouldn’t be able to eat dinner later.”

Lymir slowly looked at Naia when she heard that.

“Urgh—Naia Onee-chan, can I?”

Kiefer looked at Naia and said:

“Naia Onee-san, really, you can’t spoil Lymir! This brat has been eating sweets lately, she hasn’t been eating properly.”

“That’s, that’s not true! It’s only for today!”

“She always says it’s only for today. Naia Onee-san, say something!”

Naia had a slightly troubled expression when she saw that, then said:

“Eh~ But, it’s rare that there’s a festival, I feel that it’s alright if we’re not so strict today...”

“Ah, you’re saying we should be more lenient?!”

But Lymir said:

“Great! I love Naia Onee-san the best!! I hate Kiefer Onee-san!”

She made a face at Kiefer.

Kiefer returned the favour.

“I also hate my younger sister who wouldn’t listen to me.”

Kiefer made a face as she said that.

Lymir pouted unhappily when she saw that, turning away with an angry face, walking into the market.

Kiefer looked at her younger sister, then told her older sister:

“Naia Onee-san, do you know? That kid bought a lot of sweets today!”

Naia smiled wryly:

“Yes. But, today’s the festival... let her go. Anyway, doesn’t Kiefer have something she wants? It’s rare that there is a festival, if you want something, then buy a little. Of course it can’t be something too expensive.”

“Yes. I am quite particular about that. Like I said, Lymir bought many sweets today, I’m thinking, her money has probably been spent on buying sweets. She’ll probably want to buy clothes or toys later, at that time she will regret spending her money on tidbits. Ah, really, I can imagine that scene occurring soon.”

The image of her depressed sister appeared in her mind, Kiefer couldn’t help but laugh, then she couldn’t help but laugh, then said:

“So, I’ll split my money with Lymir. It’s rare that we have a break, that we can participate in this event together... I feel that this memory is very

precious. Anyway, she is only twelve years old, but, she can't play around like other children, she always has to go through many bad things... situated in the enemy country... she has always withstood it... so..."

At this moment, Naia suddenly caressed Kiefer's head gently.

"Ah, Kiefer is the same, a good child. But, you don't have to worry so much. Because you are fourteen years old too. It is rare that there is an event like this today, if you want anything, then tell me..."

She suddenly stopped here...

Her eyes darkened.

"...The two of you are too good."

She said as if sighing. Then she waved behind Kiefer.

Kiefer turned back too, seeing Lymir holding three sticks of candy, running towards them...

"I bought candies, Naia Onee-san! Urgh, that... and Kiefer Onee-san!"

She handed the candy to Kiefer a little clumsily...

Kiefer looked stunned when she saw that.

"...Ah, really, you're stupid. Buying three sticks of candy, your allowance is gone now?"

Lymir frowned when she heard that:

"Ah... But, but, it looked delicious, so I thought Onee-san would like it..."

Kiefer patted her little sister's head like what her elder sister had done earlier to her when she heard that.

Then Lymir placed her head against Kiefer's chest, hugging her tightly.

Kiefer laughed when she saw that. Then said:

"I say, Naia Onee-san. Just now didn't Onee-san ask me what I would like?"

Naia nodded.

“Eh? You’ve thought of something?”

But, Kiefer shook her head, then imitated her sister’s actions, leaning her head on her sister’s chest.

Followed by her hugging her sister’s head tightly.

“I already have something I want. As long as the three of us are able to live together like this, I am already satisfied.”

Really, this was enough. She already had the most important things.

Naia smiled, then hugged Kiefer’s head tightly.

That felt good...

As long as they were like that, she wouldn’t need anything else. She really thought so.

As long as the three of them were together...

At this moment, Lymir suddenly said with a panicked voice:

“Ah?! S, sorry, Kiefer Onee-san! The syrup has spilled on Onee-san’s clothes?!”

She exclaimed.

“Eh? Ah?! That can’t be?! Ahh?! I say, Lymir...”

Before she finished, Naia spoke from behind her.

“Ah, the candy sauce from mine has dripped onto Kiefer’s head...”

“Ah?! Why is it only me?!”

Lymir suddenly had a cheeky expression.

“I think, that’s because Kiefer Onee-san is a scatter-brain.”

Naia nodded forcefully.

“That’s right. Kiefer is rash when she does things...”

Kiefer hearing that.

“What is that! Really, it was the two of you who made me dirty, isn’t that a bit unfair?!”

She protested loudly. But, Naia and Lymir exchanged glances and stuck their tongues out at her.

Kiefer seemed to frown angrily.

“What, what are you up to! Don’t make fun of others~”

She said, but laughed.

They stood in the middle of the busy festival streets, looking at each other and laughing.

That day, she had laughed from the bottom of her heart...

At this moment.

Someone suddenly spoke from behind them:

“...Hey, are you sisters? How cute! What a beautiful sister.”

But Kiefer and Lymir were already accustomed to this. Men would always target Naia Onee-san, and try to flirt with her... But, every time they backed down after being glared at by Kiefer and Lymir, that was the usual pattern. It was the same for today’s festival, until then, there had been two cases, this was the third time.

So this time too... Kiefer and Lymir looked at each other, then nodding, they turned to glare at the man.

The man had a troubled expression...

“Ah? You’re shrugging me off?”

The man smiled innocently.

Then...

Kiefer's expression changed.

No, even Lymir and Naia's expressions changed.

Seeing that man...

No, seeing the armour on that man... Kiefer couldn't help but shiver.

"W...Why..."

Then she was unable to speak.

The man wore strange armour of white armour and dark blue cloak.

And, Kiefer recognised this armour. No, it should be said that it was impossible for her to forget it.

That armour, was only given to the best battalion in Roland—the special uniform of the **Mage Knight Battalion**.

And... ten years ago, their parents had been killed in a moment by monsters wearing this special armour...

At that moment, the man stared at the three sisters sharply, smiling.

"Hey, why are the Estabul dogs laughing here? Do you feel smug tricking us?"

The man said, and killing intent swelled immediately in the area.

"Ah..."

That was a pressurising feeling.

The demon of the battle field.

The strongest battalion in this country.

It couldn't be mistaken.

“Urgh...”

This man was definitely a **Mage Knight** of Roland...

Kiefer was swallowed up by this killing intent.

It kept her from escaping.

She was forced to acknowledge this point.

The difference in their strengths were too great.

They would be killed...

But, Kiefer’s vision was suddenly blocked, because Naia had jumped in front of her.

“Kiefer! Take Lymir and run!”

She shouted.

But, Kiefer was unable to move. She couldn’t escape. Faced with such a powerful monster, they couldn’t escape...

But at this moment—

“Quick!”

Kiefer had not heard Naia roar so loudly before. She heard—

“Ah... Yes!”

The fear of the other party released her for a moment, Kiefer forced her petrified body to move, grabbing Lymir’s arm she ran.

The streets were packed with people because of the festival, they squeezed through the crowd as looked back.

They saw Naia grabbing the clothes of the other people around her and shoved them towards the Mage Knight. After she blocked his vision, she started to run towards them...

Good! Kiefer thought.

This way, they probably could escape this. If it was going to be so crowded, they probably could escape successfully. She thought.

But, the man had an annoying smile, his hands were moving in the air at the same time, drawing a magic formation.

That was Roland's magic. It was completely different from Estabul's magic, Roland's magic needed a magic formation to be activated.

From the magic formation, if Kiefer didn't remember wrongly, that should be an offense magic called IZUCHI...

Kiefer seeing that.

“Ah... aren't you joking? If you use that... there, there are many other Roland citizens here?!”

But the man smirked evilly.

“So what?”

Then he chanted.

“WHAT I SEEK IS THUNDER>>> IZUCHI”

In a moment, a lightning ball appeared in the middle of the magic formation, lightning and thunder sounded, released from the magic formation in front of the man.

It was an unbelievable sight. In a moment, people weren't even able to scream before they collapsed to the ground.

The man nodded when he saw this.

“Ne, now the road is open. I'm coming, you bitches, run! I'll come and kill you immediately!”

Saying that, he stepped on the bodies of the Roland citizens without changing expression...

That was his own people... his people, and he didn't even care that he was stepping on them.

Screams sounded.

That would be obvious? Because people had seen people surrounding them die.

But the man shouted.

“Don’t move! I’m from the army. If you dare to move, I’ll kill everyone!!”

In a moment, the streets went silent.

With such a shout, the people shut up.

Everyone stopped moving.

Kiefer frowned when she saw this.

The people were already used to this. They were used to being abused by their country and army.

This was Roland.

A country that had already gone mad.

The man approached them at an unbelievable speed. He had a mild expression—he pushed over the people in his path, chasing after them.

At this moment Naia said:

“Don’t stop, Kiefer! I’ll block him for a while...”

“But?!”

“Don’t say anymore, go! It’ll be fine, I will catch up with you! Take Lymir, run to the Estabul boundary!!”

Naia said as she turned back, moving her hands, inscribing glowing words in the air.

This was Estabul’s magic.

And it was very difficult, it was a kind of magic that was high-classed. Even in Estabul, only a small percentage of the elite could learn this magic.

And her sister Naia had learnt this magic. That was expected, because in the training facility of Estabul, she had easily gained the nickname of a prodigy, and that was why she was chosen to lead the spy mission in Roland.

Naia who had that ability...

Beautiful, womanly, determined and strong, her sister was someone Kiefer was proud of...

“...”

She stared at Naia. She only saw her sister finish smoothly writing the glowing words.

“I OFFERED THE CONTRACTED WORDS, LETTING THE SLUMBERING MALICIOUS SPIRIT DWELL WITHIN”

In the moment she finished chanting, her body started to glow. That high-skilled magic was to forcefully expand the limits of her mind, pushing her body limits to the maximum.

Naia's body movements increased because of this magic. She aggressively charged towards the approaching Mage Knight and jumped...

At this moment, Kiefer turned away.

Then shouted—

“Let's go, Lymir!”

She gripped her sister's arm again, running forward.

Lymir seeing that—

“No?! I don't want to go! Onee-san, onee-san she...”

But Kiefer told her:

“She’ll be fine! Onee-san will definitely be alright! Lymir should know too, Onee-san, one-san is powerful! She will definitely defeat that person!! But, if we’re there, she’ll feel obstructed...”

“B, but...”

“Listen to me! If I say it’ll be fine, then it’ll be fine! We sisters can continue to live!”

Yes, she told herself that.

It would be fine.

Everything would be fine.

Until today, there were a few times when they had felt that they were near death, but every time the three of them supported each other, they had successfully passed through obstacles... they had worked hard to where they were now...

This time they could definitely overcome it.

As long as they did not give up, they definitely could overcome it...

The three sisters could enjoy happy days together again.

So, now they had to move.

“Let’s go!”

Kiefer shouted, pulling at Lymir who was reluctant to move, wanting to charge forward...

At this moment—

“Noooooooo~”

The scream started.

The scream came from her side.

Hearing this, Kiefer’s body trembled.

She turned, only seeing her sister crying, screaming ceaselessly.

Seeing that, Kiefer's body trembled even harder.

Her sister's face had twisted in despair...

She was scared.

Why did her sister have that expression...

She was scared to know the reason.

It can't be.

It was impossible...

Because, they had always worked hard. Earlier, the three of them had been joking around because of the clothes and candy.

So, it couldn't be...

But, her sister's screams continued to pierce Kiefer's ears...

Her little sister's screams...

It made Kiefer tremble as she turned back.

The scene reflected in her eyes was—

The image of her sister falling to the ground and...

The figure of the Mage Knight who was raising up the left arm that he had ripped off her sister's body with a hateful smile for Kiefer to see.

Blood splattered out.

Blood spurted out from her sister's slim and lovely arm.

The man smirked as he looked at Kiefer and Lymir.

“Ne, what do you think, bitches from Estabul? Will you abandon your sister and escape? Or help her?”

Lymir seeing the situation.

“Ly-Naia Onee-san?!”

She shouted, wanting to run up to her, but—

“Don’t come over!”

Naia roared. She pressed on her bleeding shoulder as she stood up, blocking the Mage Knight. Then she turned back to look at her little sisters, her face contorted with pain, but still smiling gently.

“.....I....will be fine...Escape quickly, you two. I will definitely catch up with you.”

“No!!”

Lymir screamed.

But, Naia continued smiling gently...

“Kiefer... I’ll leave Lymir to you.”

Kiefer wanted to scream too.

But she couldn’t do that.

Lymir was crying uncontrollably.

Kiefer was jealous of that.

I want to cry too...

But, Naia seemed to understand what Kiefer was thinking and shook her head.

“Aren’t you an older sister? You have to gather your wits together.”

Kiefer was unable to say anything when she heard this.

She could only scrunch up her face, tears filling her eyes...

But Naia said:

“I beg you, Kiefer.”

She didn't want to hear that.

She didn't want to hear this...

Tears flowed out.

But Kiefer didn't wipe her tears away, she made a move.

She grabbed Lymir's arm again.

"Let's go!"

Lymir shouted.

"No! No!! I don't want to be separate from Onee-san?! I'm not leaving!!"

She shouted and cried, attempting to twist free from Kiefer's grasp, but, Kiefer slapped her sister's face.

"Didn't I just say, I hate little sisters who don't listen to me!!"

She shouted angrily at her sister. Lymir's face twisted when she heard this, her tears continuing to flow...

But, she didn't cry anymore.

Seeing this...

Naia smiled happily. She seemed to say joyfully:

"...That's good, remarkable child. Haha, I really like the both of you. You really are good children. You are the little sisters who I am proud of, and you make me feel ashamed of myself."

She said.

But, it was the reverse. Kiefer and Lymir had always looked up to their sister, they had been proud of their sister.

Their beautiful, talented and gentle sister was their pride.

One day, they wished to become like their sister. They had aimed for that ever since they were young.

They had always idolised her.

And, with the progress of time, even though she had surpassed the age of their sister at that time...but she was still so clumsy...

And in an urgent situation, she was still so useless...

At this moment the man said with a happy expression:

“The sisters that you are proud of will die quickly.”

But, Naia did not react. She only said with a gentle voice:

“You don’t have to be scared, it’ll be fine. I wouldn’t let him get nearer. You can definitely escape—go quickly.”

Saying that, she faced off against the man again.

Kiefer looked at this...

“.....I also like...”

She said softly.

Naia couldn’t hear her soft voice, but...

Naia replied:

“You don’t have to say it, I know!”

Everything was unspoken.

That was obvious. They had always lived together. Ever since they were born till now, they had always been together.

Even if they didn’t say anything, they could communicate mentally.

So—

“Lymir, let’s go!”

Kiefer grabbed Lymir’s arm, running forward.

As she ran, she shouted in her heart—I love Onee-san!

She shouted that out loud in her heart repeatedly: don't die! If you can't be by our sides anymore, then I wouldn't love you!

Naia said from behind their backs, as if replying her silent shouts:

"I too... love you. So, I definitely wouldn't let you be harmed. Even if I have to sacrifice myself..."

Her voice faded away into the distance, until it was gone.

They weaved through the human throng, turning into the alleys...

She kept hearing sobs behind her. Lymir was crying as she ran. But, she couldn't cry now, she couldn't stop.

Because I am her sister.

Because I am like Naia who I idolised, I am a sister.

I have to protect my younger sister Lymir.

She ran desperately.

The map of this street rose in her mind, she chose the paths that would confuse the pursuing soldiers. When she turned back, that man had not caught up.

Naia had succeeded in blocking them.

It was possible.

She thought.

It seemed that she could escape.

After they left the centre of the market place, the passers-by became lesser; they should have put a considerable distance between them. Lymir's sobs had turned to pants at some point in time...

Kiefer saw this.

"Lymir, are you alright?"

“Y-Yes, I’m f-fi...”

She seemed as if she were unable to take it. She was already panting, if they didn’t stop to rest, she probably would be unable to move?

At this moment Kiefer entered another alley, hiding in the darkness of the shadowed alley where there was no one...

“Huff huff... We should be fine here...”

But, a familiar voice that made them unhappy spoke from the shadows of the alley...

“Dogs of Estabul, you’re clearly dogs, but you run so slowly...”

The man appeared.

Kiefer nearly screamed when she saw him.

Then, she resisted the urge. She immediately pushed Lymir behind her.

“Lymir, run...”

But, she stopped here.

The man threw the thing he had in his hands towards them... the thing rolled in front of them.

In front of them...

That thing... made Kiefer momentarily paralysed.

It was Naia’s... it was her sister’s head...

“She said, even if it took her life she would protect you. Haha. How can such a cheap being protect others?”

He man said.

Cheap being. That man described her sister who had sacrificed herself to protect them.

When Kiefer heard that...

“I, I’ll kill you?! I will definitely kill...”

But, she didn’t finish her sentence. Lymir’s cry sounded from behind her.

“No! Stop, let me go!”

Kiefer looked back, three men who wore the same odd battle uniform as the man had appeared.

Lymir was captured by them...

“You, you...”

Kiefer moaned.

So the man said:

“Hey, what did you want to do to me? Kill me? Fine. Try that. But, when you make your move, I’ll kill your sister immediately... What do you think?”

The man laughed happily. His tone was mocking.

“...”

Kiefer despaired. She couldn’t think of anything to escape from this situation.

But, she had to protect her sister.

Naia had handed her sister to her.

Even if she had to sacrifice her life...

Kiefer turned back quickly, swinging a fist at the Mage Knight who held Lymir...

But.

“Urgh?!”

A strong kick was aimed at Kiefer’s head. In a moment, the world in front of her went white, her whole body flew back. She crashed into the wall, and dropped to the ground.

With just a kick, Kiefer's leg had lost its ability to move. Her body wouldn't stop trembling...

“Ah... urgh... ah...”

The buzzing in her ears was so loud... Then slowly—

“.....Onee-san?! Kiefer Onee-san!!”

She heard Lymir's shouts.

At that moment, she was already surrounded by the four Mage Knights... then she was kicked.

“Urgh...”

Kiefer's head fell back, perhaps her mouth was bleeding? Blood gushed out. Her head collided with the wall again, and she slumped on the ground. But, the strikes didn't stop. The enemy kicked from all directions again and again, hitting her...

She was completely unable to defend herself.

She was unable to fight off the enemy.

Don't even mention about saving Lymir, she couldn't even move.

Only her sister's screams...

“No! I beg you, don't hit her anymore! Onee-san will die! She will die!”

At this point, the attacks suddenly stopped.

Kiefer lay on the ground. Unmoving. She couldn't even tell where she was hurting.

There were a few bone fractures. She observed that her right arm and right leg were twisted in odd directions...

But Kiefer didn't keep these injuries in mind. These injuries were unimportant.

What was more important was...

She tried to raise her head... Looking at the men who were smiling as they looked down at her.

“...Urgh... Pl-please. I wouldn’t resist anymore... My sister...she’s still a child. So...”

“Hm, no. I have to kill you like how I killed your sister. That’s the higher-up’s orders. Our superior ordered us to kill all the dogs from Estabul...”

But, Kiefer interrupted the man.

“Pl-please...I beg you. I’ll do anything... I’ll go through anything. I’ll do whatever you want me to do, so...my sister...”

“Enough! I don’t matter! We, we have to go find Naia Onee-san together?! So...”

But, Kiefer didn’t answer her sister.

She only looked at the men...

So, the man smiled happily. No, the other Mage Knights laughed too. Then—

“You really want to save your sister?”

The man asked, Kiefer nodded her head frantically.

It didn’t matter what happened to her.

But, at least Lymir...

The man said:

“Even if it is to betray your country? To save your sister, you can even betray the country?”

Kiefer didn’t need to hesitate.

“I will listen to your orders.”

The man laughed when he heard that.

“Haha! This person really betrayed her country without any hesitation. Is this Estabul’s spy? Ha, they really are a bunch of useless dogs.”

The man beside him nodded:

“Yeah. I actually thought that you had some relatives in Estabul who were taken as hostages, to prevent you from betraying your country, I didn’t think that... It seems like we have been thinking too much about it. If they can betray their country so easily, then why not we take the child, and make use of her sister...”

The man seemed happier when he heard this.

“Ah, that seems to be more interesting... this brat is useless. But, never mind. Our mission has ended successfully.”

Saying that the man grabbed a handful of Kiefer’s hair.

“Then, welcome to Roland. From today onwards, you will pass false information back to Estabul. If you can succeed in this mission, we will release your sister. But, before that, your sister will be taken care of by us, so you can work hard. You...’

At this moment, the man looked at Kiefer derisively.

“You traitor.”

Then he spat at her.

But, Kiefer didn’t care.

Kiefer looked at her sister... smiling. Then said:

“Don’t be scared. I will do it properly. Wait for me, I will definitely save you...”

Her sister only cried uncontrollably.

Kiefer wanted to stroke her head. Tell her, you’ve done well. You’re only twelve years old... but you have done very well. She wanted to pat her

sister's head, and tell her, I'm sorry, that things would turn out this way.

But, she was unable to move. Because of her bone fractures, she was unable to move.

Lymir needed her help, but...

But...

One day, I will definitely save her.

Because I am her sister.

Because Naia told me to take care of Lymir.

Even if I am mocked as a traitor, even if my hands are dirtied...

I definitely have to save this child.

Kiefer swore in her heart.

Definitely.

This way, she...

Became a traitor.

The wind blowing in from the window was cold.

How long had she stayed in this position?

She had stroked Ryner's hair as she remembered the past, when she came to, much to her surprise she found that the sky had darkened.

“...Ah, we have to go back... hey, Ryner. It's already dark. Let's go back.”

Then—

“Eh~ Ah, it seems like today... Uh...Ah...huh...”

Ryner said some unintelligible thing, then he started to snore again, Kiefer couldn't help but laugh.

“What a lazy person...”

His every action was so cute...

How had things progressed to this stage?

She tried to ask herself that.

Ever since that day...

In the two years that she had been separated from her sister...

Her feelings had been in a tense state ever since then.

It was so tense that no matter how compassionate others were to her, even if everyone was nice, she wouldn't confide in them...

But, why did she like Ryner so much?

She reached out to touch his hair again.

Then, she tried to say the things that she was unable to say earlier...

“...Towards Ryner, I...”

But, she swallowed her words again.

Because she didn't have the right to say that.

Betraying her country...

Betraying her friends... Betraying Sion and Tyle, Toni, Fahl...

And she would betray Ryner today.

Not long after this, war would start.

Everyone would be killed.

...And I will be the one to pull the trigger.

Everyone...

I will kill everyone.

I will kill the people I like.

“.....Urgh.”

She nearly sobbed out loud.

She grabbed Ryner’s clothes, resisting that notion.

Save me.

She swallowed that phrase.

Save me, Ryner.

She swallowed that phrase.

She wanted to die.

Actually I don’t want to kill anyone...

Actually I don’t want to kill everyone...

Save me, Ryner. Ryner, Ryner, Ryner.

Save me...

I’m begging you, save me...

Tears almost rolled out from her eyes...

At this moment—

“Ah... Wow, why is it so dark? It can’t be? It’s already night time?! I slept for a long time~”

Saying that, Ryner sat up.

In the darkness of the classroom, he looked around...

Kiefer told him:

“Really! Ryner sleeps too much! You slept from morning till now!”

She said a little angrily, then smiled.

It was a perfect smile.

No matter what the occasion was, she always smiled like that.

There was no trace of tears.

She always smiled like that.

Because she was a traitor.

She continued to tell lies in this way.

Because she was a traitor.

Chapter 1: Have a Dream

Running on the road that was leading away from the forest.

It was a road that was uneven and filled with potholes.

Although the carriage was travelling at a speed where it could nearly topple over, it continued to travel.

Behind them were the angered shouts of armoured soldiers.

“Wait!”

“I’ll kill you!!”

“Stop!!”

“I’m going to chop you into pieces!”

The soldiers yelled as they chased after the carriage...

It was a touching scene.

The carriage bounded forth, as it was chased by men who had a strong killing intent.

At the head of the carriage—Ryner Lute sat at the position of the driver.

He swung the horse whip, as he mumbled:

“...Urgh, damn...”

He had a stern expression today, which was rare for him.

His usually messy black hair was under attack by the strong gusts of wind, it couldn’t even be seen if he had combed it before.

His slim figure that made him seem lazy, was now trying its best to maintain stability and avoid falling from the carriage, as he controlled the horse...

His clothes were sloppily put on... Those clothes could only be worn by the famously strong Roland Empire Mage Knights, a special battle uniform made

up of white armor and robes.

This fashion style made him look weird...

What was more important were his black eyes.

His eyes which usually were sleepy and half-lidded, were wide open today, and were wet with tears...

Then those eyes narrowed slightly. The troubled expression that he had a moment ago returned, in a moment, a teardrop escaped from those eyes...

He said:

“.....Ah...I, I can’t make it... I want to sleep... No, I'm already asleep. Can I sleep? Of course I can’t... We have to change horses repeatedly, and we've been at this for twenty four hours... May I ask, if the horse can be changed, then couldn't you at least change the driver? I’m serious. Even if I’m not escaping, in the twenty four hours I was doing this, I could have slept for twenty four hours? But... Ah, I really can’t take it. The wind pressure is causing my eyes to... eyes... sleep... ah... uh... Good night.”

As Ryner closed his eyes with a blissful expression, almost journeying to the land of sleep...

In a moment!

“When you’re driving, you can’t sleep!”

As that voice spoke, a sword was aimed at him from the inside of the carriage, striking Ryner’s back.

Then the sword shoved sharply...

“Ah?! Hey, hey hey hey hey you’re joking, right?! Ferris!! You really used your sword to poke at me just now!!”

Ryner jumped up frantically, dodging the oncoming sword, as he shouted.

So, the window connecting the carriage and the driver’s seat opened and a

woman looked out...

This woman was an astonishingly beautiful woman.

She had lustrous golden hair, and a pair of clear blue eyes. She had a strangely attractive face. She was a beauty that would make you think of goddesses. This woman had an overpowering attractiveness that women, much less men, would be in awe of...

But, this beautiful woman stared at Ryner with an emotionless expression.

“Oh. You weren't stabbed? Then what about this?”

Saying that, she thrust the sword quickly...

“Ah?!”

Ryner dodged. But—

“This! This!”

The woman stabbed the sword again and again...

“Ah! Wait, what are you doing?! Wa... Ah ah ah!”

Ryner wobbled, twisting around on the carriage that was moving at high speed, desperately dodging the sword attacks. It seemed like he was going to fall off the carriage...

But, for some reason, the woman had a delighted expression as she stabbed repeatedly...

“Heh heh. Dance, dance, you sinful person! Enjoy the mad dance of death...”

Then, at this moment—

“Ah~ What kind of development is this?!”

Ryner backed to a place where the sword could not reach, but where he also could not dodge and shouted. But she still swung her sword, wanting to stab Ryner...

Perhaps she knew that she couldn't play at this any longer, she kept her sword in that position, then sighed...

“Hu~ It's like that, dozing off when you're driving is very dan...”

“Your sword is dangerous!!”

Ryner interrupted her and shouted. Then grasped his head with his hands, looking at the beautiful woman in front of him with half-lidded eyes.

He stared at this person—although her beauty was otherworldly, in reality Ferris Eris was a beauty with a strange personality.

Ferris said:

“Then... did you sleep well?”

“In these twenty four hours, I didn't even manage to sleep for five seconds!”

But, she nodded in satisfaction when she heard that.

“That's more than enough. You should probably be able to continue on for the next twenty hours.”

Ryner, hearing that.

“I, I will die... If I continue to stay here, I will definitely! Die...”

He trembled as he muttered.

And as they conversed—

“Hey, stop that carriage!”

“I'll kill you!!”

“I will slice you up!!”

The soldiers roared as they chased them, keeping up with the carriage—

“Stop right now!!”

“You will be dealt divine punishment if you dare to rebel against us!!”

The pursuers shouted from behind.

Ryner hearing that—

“Ah, really, they've been making so much noise since just now. What divine punishment?... You can't talk about the divine...”

He looked at the soldiers with a lazy expression.

And he found, there were four horses keeping up with the carriage. And, the men atop the horses were waving their swords threateningly. They wore armour that was made of high quality leather.

There was an insignia different from Roland's on their chest, that was made to represent their faith to their gods, the one that Runa Empire specially had, a pictorial of a woman praying with her arms crossed in front of her chest.

That picture seemed to give a saintly feeling, but...

The soldiers wearing the armour were men who had mustaches and whose muscles seemed to be their only good point...

In addition—

“Hey!! Hey, I'm going to kill you! I really going to kill you!”

They threatened Ryner, Ryner said impatiently:

“Are these fellows really soldiers of Runa? Do they really talk that way? They seem no different from mountain bandits! I feel that before they talk about this and that, Runa should first start by educating their soldiers on how to talk...”

Ferris spoke from behind him.

“Yeah. Their appearance is no different from you.”

“When did I ever talk in that manner?”

“Eh? Every night you go and steal women from the streets, ‘ho ho ho, even if you cry, no one will come to save you. This is a sound-proof room.

No! Don't come over! Someone save me!!

Heh heh heh. Didn't I say, it's useless if you cry? Ojou-san. Give up, follow my instructions obediently.

No~'

You did that repeatedly..."

"I did not!"

Ryner retorted instantly. He said tiredly:

"Speaking of which, I'm travelling with you every day, where can I get a sound-proof room..."

Suddenly, Ferris stiffened, looking around quickly.

"Un, unless, this carriage is the legendary sound-proof room?! What mature thinking you have, Ryner! You brought me to such a place, you, what are you thinking of doing to me?!!"

She screamed, glaring at Ryner.

But Ryner revealed an extremely fatigued expression...

"..." He was speechless.

So Ferris—

".....Un, unless this carriage is the legendary sound-proof..."

"Why are you repeating it?!"

"Then don't talk nonsense."

"You're the one who started it?!"

"Don't push the responsibility to other people."

"You, you, I will kill you later..."

Suddenly Ryner stopped, then spoke with a trembling voice:

“Ah, I was speaking nonsense, I was speaking nonsense. I was joking. I, I didn’t mean it. So, can you not point your sword at my back...”

The duo continued this conversation...

The Runa soldiers observing the situation—

“...You, how dare you underestimate us?!”

Maybe they finally realized that they weren’t being taken seriously, the soldiers shouted loudly.

Ryner hearing that, replied with a serious expression:

“Eh? Ah, we weren’t looking down on you. We only had a small discussion about your tone when talking to others...”

Of course the soldiers couldn’t accept Ryner’s explanation.

“I don’t want to hear your nonsense, hand over the son of the devil that you snatched away!”

The soldiers said.

The son of the devil.

Ryner narrowed his eyes when he heard that, turning back.

“Ferris... How is Arua?”

She replied:

“He’s still unconscious.”

Saying that, she pointed to her knee. Ryner seeing that, looked into the carriage. He saw a boy lying on Ferris’s lap, fast asleep...

He looked at Arua.

He was probably six years old? He was a boy that had black hair like Ryner.

And he was called a devil by the Runa soldiers...

Arua's face and body had many bruises and wounds... Ryner's eyes darkened.

Arua was seen as the devil's son. After he had been captured by the Runa soldiers, up until yesterday, he had suffered from unimaginable torture.

His whole body was injured, his mother was killed, and he witnessed his father's beheading...

But the Runa nobles had laughed when they saw that.

“Ne, lose control quickly, you demon!”

They laughed, hitting the boy repeatedly. Destroying everything precious to him.

There was a mark in the boy's eyes. It was the same as in Ryner's eyes, the same red five-pointed star.

As long as they looked upon it, no matter what kind of magic, or how complicated it was, they could understand it in a split second, eyes that could replicate.

Eyes that were called **Alpha Stigma**.

Just because they had these eyes, they were outcast and hated by everyone... they were cursed as monsters, seen as demons...

And when they felt that everything was useless, they would completely lose control...

They would create mass slaughter.

The person himself would not want to do it, but he would unconsciously kill everyone around him, killing everyone important.

Perhaps being called a demon... had another meaning.

Perhaps being seen as a monster was inevitable.

But, then...

People who beat a child, killing their relatives in front of him happily, weren't they the demons?

As long as he closed his eyes, those images would leap forth.

Those people's smiling faces.

The smiles of those who teased people and gained entertainment from doing so...

The smiles of those people who killed those who loved and treasured him, and gained pleasure from the act.

Weren't those people demons?

Even those people had called us demons...

Ryner's expression darkened momentarily.

The Runa soldiers still continued to shout from around them.

“Know your place, stop the carriage!! Or else, God will punish you!”

Ryner hearing that, revealed a self-mocking smile...

“Oh? God's punishment is effective towards demons?”

The Runa soldiers were probably happy that the other party was taking note of this, puffing out their chests:

“That's right! It's too late even if you know that now! The demon will definitely be exterminated by God!”

“Huh. Then try it! Let's see if god's power can exterminate us demons...”

Saying that, Ryner's right hand moved quickly in the air, glowing words started to unfurl in the space...

That was magic that he had replicated from the Estabul Mage Knight he encountered a long time ago.

The Runa soldiers seeing the situation, were momentarily shocked.

“He’s, he’s using magic?! And it is another country’s magic?! Prepare for incoming...”

But, Ryner shrugged.

“Too late—I OFFER THE CONTRACTED WORDS, RELEASING THE SPIRIT OF LIGHT DANCING IN THE SKY.”

As soon as he finished chanting, a huge beast made from light that looked like a dog, and had an unstable outline appeared above his head... Following that, he released this light beast towards the area below where the Runa soldiers were sitting.

In a moment.

The earth exploded, the light shone brilliantly...

The horses neighed, after a period of crying, it stopped. Of course, the Runa soldiers were thrown off the horses when they stopped suddenly.

“Uh, Uah?!”

“That, that was done sloppily... Ah?!”

Some people shouted as they fell off their horses, some left the road, the horses carrying their riders as they entered the forest.

Anyway, things turned out like that...

“The demon won so easily?”

They put more distance between themselves and the Runa soldiers.

At this moment, a voice spoke from behind him.

“Eh. Has it ended? Good work.”

Ferris said. Ryner hearing that, seemed impatient.

“I say... Why didn’t you help out? Since I’m going to be driving the carriage for the next ten hours, you should have at least helped to defeat those

people.”

But, Ferris replied:

“I can’t, I’m busy now.”

“Busy with what?”

“Eh, busy protecting this child.”

“Ah, ah, that’s right. If we leave this child on the vigorously bouncing carriage, he might hit his head or something, it’s too dangerous...”

But, Ferris shook her head.

“It’s not that. Look at this child, black eyes, black hair, and a wielder of **Alpha Stigma**, it’s almost like his extremely perverted father... I have a duty to protect him, so that he won’t become like his scary and fierce pervert of a father who likes to abduct women.”

Ryner, hearing that...

“I said that he’s not my kid! Anyway, who’s the one who abducts women... That, how did it go? Anyway, I’m not that kind of pervert...”

When Ryner wanted to look back again, Ferris suddenly backed away.

“Stand still! Don’t come nearer! This Ryner-chan will be corrupted!”

She shouted at Ryner.

Ryner hearing that, had a weak expression.

“...You... Actually saying something like that, you find it interesting?”

Ferris nodded her head immediately.

“Anyway we have a lot of time.”

“Ah?! Since we have so much time, then change shifts with me!”

“I’m very busy now...”

“If you say anymore I’ll kill you!! Ah... Forget it... As long as I’m with you, it seems like nothing else is missing, how peaceful...”

After Ryner sighed, he loosened the reins, beginning to slow the horses down. He leaned his body out from the driver’s seat, looking behind them, confirming that the Runa soldiers had not chased up.

“Ah, after teaching them a lesson, and pulling the distance between us, they won’t catch up for a while...”

Saying that, he slowed the speed of the carriage to a slow pace. Then told Ferris who was behind him:

“Ne, what should we do next? It’s worth celebrating that we managed to escape the Runa soldiers, but...”

So she replied simply:

“Didn’t I say it yesterday? We go to the little lady in Rajit Village who asked us to save this Ryner-chan and ask for our reward. Then we take our reward and go to tour the dango stores in Runa Empire...”

At this moment, Ryner interrupted her:

“Ah, don’t mention the dango matters first. But, I remember that she was called Kuku, right? The childhood friend of Arua or something... It seems she doesn’t have enough money for a reward... But putting this aside, if we don’t find Kuku, things would be bad. We have to tell her, we saved Arua... And...”

Ferris heard that, her eyes narrowing slightly.

“Uh. The Runa army might go after her.”

Ryner nodded when he heard that.

“That’s right. They must want to snatch Arua back from us... But, Arua’s father and mother were killed, that means... They would probably take his childhood friend as hostage, right? Even if they didn’t do that, Kuku would

be tortured by the villagers because she was friends with Arua...”

Ryner momentarily remembered the villagers cursing “It’s all your fault”, and Kuku’s figure when she was suffering from torture, frowning unconsciously.

That was something that he saw frequently.

It was something that could be commonly seen in the Roland of the past.

The nobles were unreasonable. The sacrificed were always the weak...

And the Runa Empire that had been the ally of the Roland of the past, currently was this kind of country.

A completely insane country.

Proud nobles, and the uncontrollable army that supported that power.

The people always lived under the shadow of these two forces, the crazy country that was breathing its last.

“...Really, we accidentally got caught up in something troublesome...”

Ryner sighed as he said, a voice spoke from behind him:

“Really. Anyhow having a child with a woman passing by, abandoning them without any thought, and now needing someone else to help rescue your child... How troublesome.”

“...Hey, are you going to continue that topic?”

“Eh. Anyway before we reach Rajit Village, I’m going to be very bored.”

“.....Ah, th-then before we reach, can we switch positions...”

But at this moment—

“Uhn. Sorry, I’m suddenly busy again.”

“...”

Ryner hearing that.

“…Y-yes, I understand, Hime-sama…”

Ryner said with a defeated tone. Ferris immediately answered:

“Eh. Let’s go, slave.”

“I should have killed you!”

Like that, the people on the carriage, carried on as usual, with their nonsensical conversation as they proceeded.

Heading towards Rajit village...

On the other hand.

In the most southern tip of the Menoris Continent.

This country was even further south than the Runa Empire where Ryner and the others were.

Roland Empire.

Lately, it had been called a strong Empire.

This country had swallowed up Estabul that had opposed it for so long; it had formed good relations with Imperial Nelpha, which was in an unstable situation. And it had formed an alliance with the Runa Empire, expanding its influence.

Everything had started after the new king ascended.

The king of Roland Empire, Sion Astal.

Although he was the son of the concubine of the previous king, he had gained great achievements during the war with Estabul Kingdom, rising to the highest ranks in the Roland Empire army in an incredibly short period of time.

After that he started a revolution, getting rid of the previous tyrannical king and becoming the Hero King that had saved the country.

Sion who was only nineteen years old, possessed all the talents a king needed.

Charisma, ability, looks.

He skillfully used these talents, gaining much of the people's support...

He was the ideal king everyone wanted.

...No, this was the image that everyone had of him.

Everyone had expectations, dreams, wishes of him.

In the past the corruption of the country had reached such a level that the people cried, always praying that a king like him would appear.

So, he was a perfect king.

So, he had to be a perfect king.

So...

The location was the castle where the king of Roland Empire lived. Sion sat on the throne, smiling happily.

“Don’t bow, I clearly understand your loyalty towards me.”

He told the kneeling nobles.

The nobles revealed a fearful expression. The nobles who had always been arrogant towards Sion, had a pale complexion today.

“Th-then, you’ve already forgiven our rude behavior, Your Majesty?”

Rude behavior...

They said that.

But, Sion had doubts in his mind—what rude behavior? If they were referring to their rude words, then there would be an infinite number. Of course they

had numerous plans too, plans to harm Sion.

The most extreme one was to kill Sion's secretary, Fiole Folkal...

So that they could threaten Sion, they killed him.

Sion immediately thought of Fiole's smile.

"Because if I'm not by his side, Sion-sama will always force himself to do things."

He remembered that face, after saying that, he had a troubled smile.

Then remembering the smile that his sister, Eslina was proud of...

Remembering that smile that said, Sion was a king that was able to make Roland the country his sister would live in, it was really a blessed smile.

Then, he remembered the scene of the stabs on Fiole's body, that caused him to die...

At that time... he wanted to kill all of the nobles, everyone.

He wanted to kill the nobles who had caused this country to decay.

But... he knew this wasn't what Fiole had wished for. What Fiole had asked of him, was to be a good king.

A perfect king that would steer the country in the right direction.

So, hearing the words of the nobles today, Sion pretended not to know what they were referring to, shrugging.

"Rude? What does that mean? Have you ever been rude to me?"

"Eh? Ah, no, that..."

The nobles stumbled.

"Don't worry. You weren't out of line. You don't have to think about it too much. Please rest assured and continue leading the people to a better life."

Sion told the nobles, smiling. The nobles hearing that, had an expression as if

they were about to cry.

“O-Of course. I will work hard for Your Majesty, and cooperate with the governing of the land...”

But, Sion interrupted him at this moment.

“For the people... Please work hard for the sake of making the people happy. Because this is the fastest method to make Roland a better country...”

Yes. No longer having the abusive government that only satisfies itself.

Roland had changed.

Roland changed Fiole... No, it changed everyone's vision of a country that they had in their dreams.

The nobles nodded frantically when they heard that.

“O-of course. Because there are the citizens, there are us...”

Hearing that, Sion nearly smiled bitterly. How could they still dare to say something like that...

Sion nodded, indicating for the nobles to excuse themselves. The nobles were about to leave the hall fearfully...

A man brushed past the nobles, walking into the hall.

Beautiful and neat long black hair, added on to his slim and tall figure, and an attractive face, but...

How many people would notice these features?

Whenever a person looked at him, the first thing they would notice would be that pair of cold deep blue eyes...

People were always captured by that extremely cold, almost ice like, slim pair of eyes...

Lieutenant Colonel Miran Froaude.

He had come to work under Sion of his own accord, promising not only to let Sion rule all of Roland Empire, but even to expand the empire to extend to the whole of the Menoris Continent.

He had moved on his own, willing to help take care of the dark, dirty things that Sion could not avoid on this path of ruling.

And like he promised, he had accomplished his task well.

He had depended on his own power, cleansing the power of the nobles who had opposed Sion...

He had killed all those people.

Even his father, Baron Froaude could not escape.

In the end, the surviving nobles were just like these, trembling in fear, bowing in front of Sion.

At this moment, Froaude lowered his head, passing by the nobles who were retreating quickly, he said:

“Hello, everyone, have you come to gain His Majesty’s favour?”

The nobles hearing that, turned around.

“...How dare you... Who are you...”

But, they immediately stopped. The nobles suddenly smiled when they saw Froaude.

“Ah... Isn’t this Lieutenant Colonel Froaude-sama? Your father Baron Froaude was killed earlier in the purging, he was killed by His Majesty...”

The nobles beside him added.

“Your own father has been dealt with harshly, but you come to curry favour with His Majesty in order to live, and you still dare to say something like that to us, aren’t you too outrageous?”

Froaude hearing that, seemed to lower his eyes as if in thought.

“...Too outrageous? Ah, perhaps that is so. If I don’t treat His Majesty nicely, perhaps I will make him angry...”

Saying that, he glanced at Sion.

Sion seeing that, shrugged helplessly.

It was unimaginable that Froaude would curry favour with Sion.

But, the nobles laughed. This was the first time that they laughed with a mocking expression.

“You mean, you want to continue to curry favour with His Majesty... What an unbelievable person. Someone like you will cause Roland to decay!”

They said, and raised their voices, deliberately allowing Sion to hear it clearly.

But, Sion looked at these nobles with a pitiful expression—you’re really saying something so foolish to Froaude... Sion thought.

At this moment Froaude nodded.

“Eh. You’re right. Someone like me will probably cause Roland to rot.”

The nobles were even more arrogant at this.

“Haha. Are you finally aware?”

So Froaude said:

“Eh. I have done some reflection on my unfair behaviour recently. Although His Majesty tried to stop me, but I acted on my own accord, personally taking care of the nobles who dared to go against His Majesty...”

In a moment.

“Huh?”

The nobles made a foolish sound.

The expressions on their faces showed that they completely could not

understand what Froaude was saying.

Froaude continued mildly:

“In the end, I even took care of my father who has taken care of me for so long...”

The nobles hearing that—

“You... What are you saying... Th-then, that purging act was done by you...”

So Froaude smiled.

A dark, cold, demon-like smile. Just seeing it made one tremble, it was a smile that hid a frenzy.

The nobles seeing that, were momentarily speechless.

Froaude’s smile became even darker, deeper.

“But, the kind king forgave me, and even praised me... the outrageous me could once again gain His Majesty’s praise... and I am searching for my next prey...”

Saying that, he stared at the nobles. The nobles moved back unconsciously...

The situation was completely under Froaude’s control. He only depended on words to control the nobles...

“But, since you have all come to please His Majesty... I guess no one here is planning any conspiracies?”

The nobles hearing that, nodded frantically.

“O-of course not. W-w-we will remain loyal to His Majesty forever...”

“Then I can rest assured.”

Froaude hearing that, lightly bowed his head.

Perhaps they felt that they were finally released? The nobles quickly said:

“Th-then we’ll take our leave...”

Saying that, the nobles left the hall with a tired expression, and whispered as they trembled:

“Wh-what is that person... He is c-completely mad...”

Their voices faded away from the hall, and were gone...

Froaude seeing that, turned to Sion, and said with that cold expression:

“Your Majesty, what do you think?”

Sion hearing that, frowned.

“The way you speak, is that what you were talking earlier about currying favour?”

Froaude said as he approached Sion:

“Did I not do well?”

But Sion shook his head.

“No, you did well. I have a crazy murderer under my command called Froaude... So that he can get my praise, he can even kill his father without a change in his expression... I guess this rumour will spread very quickly?

“Towards the fear that was generated because of the purging act, the bulk of the hate will transfer to you... Thanks to that, my interaction with the other nobles will become easier. But...”

At this moment, Sion’s expression sharpened.

Froaude’s actions would gain much opposition. Even the close people who stayed by Sion’s side hated his actions. He always used plans that, if Fiole were alive...he would have been the first to protest against.

No matter the sacrifice, he would choose the most effective path. That was the path that Froaude walked on.

It was really the most effective route...

This purging act was the same.

The purging that Froaude had carried out, had given the nobles a strong warning. No, not only that, the action had radically changed the whole country.

Ever since the purging, a majority of the nobles, even if only for appearances, had not fought against Sion's wishes, and even came to visit.

Other than that, because the nobles who had misused their authority of power for their own benefit had been purged, the people's support for Sion had increased.

Or it could be said, Froaude's purging act had caused the administration of Roland to progress greatly?

But, in contrast, many nobles had died. Among them were probably people who didn't mean to go against the king.

And...

He had killed everyone.

“...”

Sion's brow drew together even more.

That purging act, was actually a murder without any special treatment. And Froaude had carried out that massacre.

But, the people were happy at this.

When they heard this news, the people said long live the Hero King.

They said, the Hero King has indeed helped us to get rid of the parasites.

They said, the Hero King has helped us to get revenge...

The people were ecstatic.

Of course, there were some traces of Froaude's controlling of information in there. Perhaps he covered up the dirty portions, covering up the parts that people dared not to see, only emphasising on the Hero King's grandness.

But, the truth was the truth.

Many people were killed... And the people could only celebrate that.

If this isn't odd, then what is?

How different was this from the past Roland?

It was only that the role of the sacrifice had switched.

If it wasn't the nobles, it was the citizens...

At this moment, Froaude aimed his cold eyes at Sion.

“...Or perhaps, Your Majesty wanted to create an ideal world without killing anyone?”

He asked.

But, Sion shook his head.

“No, I trust that the path you took was the one with the least sacrifices? If I allowed the nobles to continue living, Roland's progress to be better would have been delayed... And we, no, this country has no more time left.”

Sion said, it was almost the same as acknowledging the actions that Froaude had took up.

Froaude could have killed innocent people. But, he accepted it.

This way of doing things...

How different was it from the nobles who had killed the innocent Fiole?

As he thought that, Sion couldn't help but feel disgusted.

The purging act was necessary. That was undeniable.

But, he still felt disgusted.

He felt disgusted that the one who created that situation was him.

He felt disgusted that he was helpless.

No, not only that, perhaps it was even too late to speak about it.

According to the news from the spies from various places, there was almost no time left.

The world was starting to move.

Chaos... and it will be unprecedented, the large ruckus that will change the whole of the Menoris Continent was about to begin.

So that Roland would not be affected by this chaotic movement, he couldn't stop here.

So, he accepted.

To reach that goal, no matter how dirty he was...

So that he could protect more people.

Sion crossed his arms and said:

“The problem is, your purging act didn’t kill all the anti-royalist nobles. At the moment all the active anti-royalist nobles are dead, but...”

Froaude nodded when he heard that.

“But, the one who was in charge of the anti-royalist noble was Duke Stearead... and he was killed by someone outside of us.”

“Eh. And the person who killed Stearead and assaulted you, was someone from another country—this is the point that is most troubling.”

Sion said. On the day that the purging occurred... Froaude had fought with someone from another country. And, that person had come to attack Sion.

This problem...

At this moment Froaude said:

“Yes. This isn’t an ideal situation. I realised that Duke Stearead had a more powerful noble behind him, and… if this noble joined hands with people from other countries… even killing Duke Stearead… and commanding that foreigner to assassinate Your Majesty, then it’ll be harder to find out his identity.”

Sion nodded in agreement when he heard that.

Froaude was right.

There were nobles who were more powerful than Duke Stearead. To find out the person’s real identity wasn’t something difficult. And powerful people could be found easily. Even if they served Sion on the surface, one day, they would be found out.

But…

If this person had such deep ties with people from other countries, then this was different.

Even if it were an insignificant noble, if they depended on another country’s support, they could have a great power because of that.

“Things are… difficult? I wanted to deal with the nobles problem in one fell swoop, so I proceeded with the high risk measure of the purging…”

Sion frowned as he said, Froaude narrowed his eyes too.

“But, things have improved. This country is changing. Aren’t the people grateful to Your Majesty? If one more corrupted noble dies… This country will have a major transition…”

He said. Then—

“Ah, if I say this then I’ll be unable to reduce Your Majesty’s burden…”

Sion hearing that, frowned even harder.

“That’s true. That wasn’t reassuring, it even…”

At this moment, he stared at Froaude. He glared at him sharply...

“According to what you said, it seems like you’re saying that you want to kill the remaining nobles?”

Froaude smiled when he heard that. He had a dark smile that most people would not notice, but would startle them. He finally said:

“If that is what Your Majesty wishes...”

But, Sion interrupted him.

“Stop, Froaude. Don’t misunderstand. I don’t want unnecessary blood spilled.”

Then he glared at Froaude harder.

“You are indeed a capable person. I feel that you are a talent that I need. But, even so, if you continue to move independently, I won’t forgive you. I have my ideal world. The one to decide that world isn’t you, but me, the king.”

He said.

He was serious.

Froaude’s plans were reasonable. It could even be said, that he always made the best decisions. But, now Sion had to say the ugly things first.

So that they would be able to cooperate and move ahead.

So that they could construct a better country in the future.

If he dirtied things...

But Froaude said:

“You don’t wish for unnecessary blood to spill, but... if needed, will you kill me?”

But Sion shook his head.

“I wouldn’t kill you, but, if you hinder me, I will probably put you in prison.”

Froaude hearing that, smiled faintly. Although it was a dark, demon-like smile like earlier, it had a strange tint of happiness.

“...I will keep that in mind. But, I will not betray you. Because to me, being able to follow you is a pleasure. So, I will not betray you.”

Saying something so sincere, Sion couldn’t help frown.

“Hey, what is this? You’re still paying lip service?”

But Froaude shook his head, happily saying:

“This is the truth. You mean, if need be, you would even deal with your subordinates... you have not disappointed me. Your priority is the people’s stable lives... But, you are a king that would make sacrifices to save more people.

“You look to be weak, it seems like you’re so fragile that you would shatter upon touch, a person who is easily damaged, but... you are a king who tries to sacrifice himself. And a king who will never stop progressing. This is the reason why I chose you as the king. And after today... as long as you satisfy my expectations...”

Froaude pressed a hand to his chest, preparing to kneel, at this moment someone spoke...

“Hey, hey, that seems uncomfortable. What are you doing? I thought that only the nobles would come to curry favour from Sion all day, it’s really annoying, but I didn’t think that Froaude would learn to curry favour as well?”

A hoarse man’s voice spoke.

Sion raised his head when he heard this.

He saw a red-haired man with attractive features and a tall build walk through the entrance to the hall.

It was a man who had a body like steel.

This man in his twenties was a subordinate who had followed Sion before he was the king and before he held the Field Marshal position of Roland Empire. And this was the only man in Roland who still called Sion by his name.

Field Marshal Claugh Klom.

No, should it be said that it was better that he finally held the position of Field Marshal?

Almost all the high positions in Roland's army were taken by the nobles... Even if Sion had become king, if Claugh's abilities shone in the army, Sion would be unable to promote him to Field Marshal.

The nobles had such power.

This was that kind of country.

But, now Claugh could sit comfortably on the top position of the army.

In the strange change in manpower earlier, Claugh had jumped up from a Major-General to become a Field Marshal.

At the present, the people who held the Field Marshal rank were... two nobles, Claugh was the third Field Marshal, but...

All the power was nearly in Claugh's hands.

That was to be expected.

Being able to sit on the Field Marshal's seat because they were noble-born, the proud nobles were unable to compare to Claugh's popularity and ability.

Of course Claugh who had become the Field Marshal would have protested, this was to be expected. If all else failed, the nobles could have rebelled.

And... after that change in personnel.

The nobles who would have rebelled were almost all killed by Froaude...

So, the nobles kept quiet.

No, not only that...

Claugh had an irritated expression and said:

“I just passed a group of cowardly nobles, they were all here to suck up, right? Really, they used to look down on others, but they’ve suddenly become obedient, looking at them, makes me want to go mad.”

Sion smiled bitterly.

“That’s right. People who used to be arrogant suddenly come to get my favour, it makes one feel unpleasant.”

Saying that, he looked at Frouade.

Claugh nodded, looking at Frouade...

Frouade seeing the situation, said:

“...Are you talking about me?”

Claugh heard that, and said:

“Does it need to be said? Just seeing you almost kneeling, I was worried that it would snow today.”

So Frouade stood as he said:

“Field Marshal Claugh, your implications are heavy... Do I look like I look down on others usually?”

But Claugh nodded his head simply.

“Eh. Sometimes I even suspect, maybe you are the king of this country. Because you are always so filled with confidence that it makes it unpleasant to look at you...”

But Sion interrupted at this point:

“Hey, if you say that, then you mean that I don’t look like a king?”

Claugh smiled widely when he heard that:

“Of course. To me, you will always be like when I first met you, when we rebelled, my talented superior, Field Marshal Sion. But, really, look, you’re actually the king of this country now, and I’m the Field Marshal? It’s too troublesome, don’t be like this, I wouldn’t blame you, just revert to your Field Marshal status, then I can wave away the duty of being Field Marshal...”

But, Sion sighed before he finished speaking.

“Raising this again... Ever since Major General Miller refused to replace you as the Field Marshal, you have been complaining from day till night.”

Claugh’s eyes flashed with anticipation when he heard that.

“That’s right! I wanted to talk to you today about that matter! Miller-senpai told me with an unhappy expression, “You’re better suited to be a Field Marshal than me”, and was completely unwilling to hear what I had to say! So today I used my free time during work to send a letter, and I wrote “Then let that fellow Luke be Field Marshal”, I didn’t think...”

At this moment, he took a piece of paper clumsily from his pocket, handing it to Sion...

“Look at that.”

Sion hearing that, looked at the paper. He saw the paper had meticulous and angular words on it:

“To Field Marshal Claugh Klom.

At the moment Sergeant Luke Stokkard is on a mission outside the country, and thus unable to follow your order.”

Sion raised his head and asked:

“This is?”

This time, Claugh had a serious expression.

“What's that ‘this is’? Luke that guy is a sergeant? What is going on? I heard this long ago, you know, that guy was used by you during the revolution, and he was the one who went around with me? But now he is only a sergeant? And I've become a Field Marshal, and every day I'm dizzy with the paper work that I don't want to do, but that guy is only a sergeant?”

Sion had a bitter smile at this.

“What can I do? Because that person said, he didn't wish for his rank to be higher than Miller's.”

“Then can't you promote Miller-senpai? No, to be more accurate, I think that it is impossible for me to be Field Marshal! There are more people who are suited for this...”

But, this time Froaude interrupted:

“No, I think Field Marshal Claugh is most suitable.”

Claugh hearing that, seemed to frown really unhappily this time, staring straight at Froaude.

“Y-you even want to pay lip service to me... What are you planning?”

“I'm only saying what I think...”

“Liar! You're being polite to me, you must have some sort of plan! I won't be tricked by you! Because I don't believe you.”

Froaude's expression remained unchanged when he heard this.

“Is that so? Even if I am not trusted by you, I don't care.”

“Ah, that's enough, it's this part of you that is so annoying. I can't understand what you're thinking...’

“And I think that your special trait is the ability to lead this country's army.”

Froaude suddenly spoke, Claugh widened his eyes when he heard that.

“Ah? Trait?...”

“I mean, your unbelievably simple thought process, this point is part of your charisma, it makes the soldiers even willing to chase after you. I can’t do that. You can make this country’s army...”

Claugh interrupted him.

“Are you making fun of me?!”

“No, I’m praising you...”

“How does that sound like praise?!”

Claugh shouted.

Froaude tilted his head, as if troubled, when he heard that, after seeming to think deeply about what phrase to use...

“...Uhn, no matter how you interpret it, I think it’s fine.”

“I’ll beat you up, you...”

Sion stopped the angry Claugh at this point.

“Alright, alright, that’s enough. Really, why do you always quarrel when you meet, how unfitting.”

He smiled wryly. Claugh said with an unhappy expression:

“Is someone at odds with this guy?”

Sion hearing that, thought about it for a moment, then...

“...Uhn, I’ll not talk about this now... Oh yes, Claugh. Did you come to find me just to complain? I should ask, you complained so much, have you seriously done any work?”

At this moment, Claugh frowned, then smiled suddenly:

“.....O-of course I worked hard. A-about the documents, I’ve already asked my subordinates to help...”

But Sion interrupted him in surprise.

“In reality you must have pushed it to him, am I right? Really, I saw that you came to disturb me every day, and I thought that you were very familiar with the work...”

“How can I be familiar with it! After I entered the army, it’s been like this! I’ve always passed the paper work to others!”

He said with an expression that said that he had forgotten about what happened earlier.

Sion seeing that.

“And you’re proud of this?”

But, Claugh suddenly changed to a serious expression.

“But, my responsibility is the dangerous mission that others don’t like to do. You should know that, right? I don’t like it that people other than me lose their lives. I hate hiding in safe places, watching people die. I am suited to be on the frontline... About this matter, I wanted to ask you... what is Luke doing now? What is the fellow who worked with you during the revolution, going around outside the country with the rank of a sergeant... What did you command Luke that person to do?”

Sion only shrugged when he heard that.

“Nothing. I gave Luke to Miller.”

He said. Actually he didn’t lie. But, he had given Miller some orders...

So Claugh asked:

“What? Is it some secret mission that even I cannot know?”

Saying that, those sharp eyes narrowed even more. It was like an eagle focusing on its prey.

“Under the current situation, allowing someone like Luke go outside the country... This means, it’s Gastark? You sent Luke to that country to spy...

right?"

What a sharp observation.

Sion nearly made a sound of surprise.

Froaude had taken Claugh as a joke earlier, but... in the current situation, he wasn't so simple. No, actually he was more clever, aware than anyone else.

After experiencing so much situations, wars, emergency situations, he had survived, becoming better after the war.

He wasn't so simple.

Claugh mentioned Gastark. To the current Roland, that was one of the big problems.

Gastark Empire, it was in the northern part of the Menoris Continent, and it was very far away from Roland in the south.

This country was only formed recently, it was a small country that most people did not know about.

But, this small country was currently stirring up the Menoris Continent.

It had already conquered several small countries... and the large southern military country, Stohl, which had five times the power, land, army of Roland's had been attacked by Gastark, and had been defeated.

According to the latest information, the southern countries were quickly strengthening their armies.

Of course, that was something that was happening far away from their country...

The fires of war may not even spread to Roland...

But, the world was indeed undergoing changes.

And it was changing quickly, with the small country Gastark Empire at its centre...

At this moment, Froaude stared at Sion and said:

“I see. This cannot be taken lightly. Your Majesty has already sent spies to Gastark?”

But, Sion shook his head.

“No, Luke has not headed to Gastark. He has another mission.”

“So, that is a mission?”

But Sion shook his head.

“No. But, his actions have not gained any results. And, we do not know when we will get any results. So currently there’s no need to reveal the situation.”

Claugh hearing that, frowned...

Sion seeing that, asked:

“What? You feel hurt that I’m hiding something from you?”

“How would I feel hurt because of this?”

Claugh seemed to say angrily. Then asked:

“Didn’t I say it earlier? I hate seeing others die, but being unable to do anything. So I like the front line... But, now I’m forced to do some desk job. And Luke can carry out some top secret mission outside the country? You’re too cunning... What about me? Isn’t there some kind of top secret mission that you can give me?”

He said that... Sion laughed.

“You... are you serious? How can someone like you do something like a top secret mission?”

“Ah?! What does that mean? If you say stealth missions, I’ve done a few during the revolution...”

But Sion said with a surprised expression:

“No, I’m not referring to that... I meant, your reputation is too big, so you can’t do something like that. Crimson Finger Claugh Klom... In numerous battles, because your hands were stained red with your enemies’ blood, you’ve been given this title... Your reputation in other countries, is so scary that people can compare it with Roland’s Mage Knights? You think someone as infamous as you can proceed with a top-secret mission?”

Claugh frowned so hard when he heard this.

“Urgh...”

He moaned. But Sion continued:

“Even if Luke had many accomplishments during the revolution, but at the moment he is only a sergeant. Compared to Luke who other countries have almost no knowledge of, who is most suited to do the top-secret mission is obvious? You only need to obediently sit on the Field Marshal throne. Your shining reputation will stir the other countries, there will be more meaning when you lead the army. Ah, I’ll let you know, that was a compliment!”

Claugh hearing that, had a contorted expression...

“...Then what about my trip to Gastark?”

“How can that be?”

Sion replied with a surprised expression.

To this Froaude said:

“But, even if the Field Marshal is not suited to going, there is a need to send someone, and someone trustworthy has to enter Gastark Empire. And it must be as soon as possible...”

Sion nodded:

“Eh, that’s right. But, what’s more important is to choose talented people. Many of the nobles have died, the talented people who have been banished have started to move. If we don’t quickly get these people, this country will

not have any future. Now no matter what kind of person we choose, the nobles will not react... that is the effect that the purging act has.”

As Sion finished speaking, Claugh had an unhappy expression...

But, Froaude who had carried out the purging act said:

“Although that’s the case, it also has adverse effects. Firstly, due to that purging act, other country’s opinions of Your Majesty had worsened. Oppressing Estabul, killing nobles, forcefully maintaining the country’s stability... The impression that Your Majesty leaves on other people is Roland’s new king’s strong attacks, it may probably even snatch other countries quickly. Furthermore, Your Majesty made use of Field Marshal Claugh’s good feelings to politely receive the Estabul princess, Noa Ehn. And successfully suppressed the Estabul nobles... They may be fearful towards the strong actions that Your Majesty is taking, and there may be another uprising.”

Claugh hearing that.

“What do you mean? Talking about which, aren’t there more drawbacks? It was you who decided to kill...”

But Froaude said:

“But, even if it is risky, there is a need to cut off all sources of the power of the anti-royal nobles. To let this country stand firmly again, this is unavoidable. And...”

At this moment, Sion continued:

“So as to deal with the rapidly changing world... right? Currently Roland’s power, don’t even talk about Nelpha or Runa, we don’t have the power to go against other countries. That purging act has made people felt disgusted, but, it was a necessary act, Claugh. At the moment, the nobles are powerless before us. After today, the country will be changed greatly. Firstly it will be the laws that change. We will abolish the laws that favour the nobles, then

gather all the talented people in the country. Among those the most anticipated are... probably the Estabul people? They are worth anticipating than the Roland nobles who suddenly began to come to gain my favour.”

Claugh nodded when he heard that.

“Eh, probably. Last time when we suppressed Estabul, I knew it when we fought... They are quite well trained. As long as we search carefully, there should be some talented people.”

“It’s like that, Claugh, after this you’ll have more work, and that is to be in charge of selecting those Estabul talents. You will immediately head to Estabul’s lands, choose the people who you think have talent.”

But Claugh said:

“No, at the moment it’s a bit hard? Currently they have been scattered by the army and settled down... If the army starts to regroup, who knows if they’ll rebel again... Their love for their country is so strong. And they are extremely loyal, the more talented the person, the more so. I don’t think by raising these people to Roland’s high ranks, can allow them to be suitable for the role. If there is a mistake, it may even cause Roland to collapse from the inside...”

But Sion stared at Claugh.

“So I wanted to ask you. I want to ask you who gained the support of the previous princess of Estabul who was supported by the Estabul people, who has strong ties with Noa Ehn.”

In a moment, all expressions disappeared from Claugh’s face.

“.....You want me to make use of Noa?”

“You don’t want to?”

“That doesn’t have to be said!”

Claugh glared at Sion as he shouted:

“...You should know it too?! Even if you don’t use her, she is already suffering. Because she didn’t know the plans of that companion, she caused her comrades to be killed, but to save the people, she was willing to be sacrificed... She came to Roland, knowing that she would be labelled as a traitor? And, she is not even seventeen years old. She’s always smiling, as if she doesn’t care, but in truth... She’s still a young lady. Coming to the enemy’s fortress alone... How could she be happy?

And, the Estabul people and nobles piled their hopes of reviving the country on her. So the two countries can enjoy the current peace. The reason why Estabul is not acting is because Noa is in this castle. But now you’re planning to...”

Claugh’s eyes were flaming with anger.

Anger and disappointment.

Even so, Sion still looked at him steadily in the eye, nodding:

“That’s right. What I’m planning to do, is to make her shoulder more unsavoury things of being a traitor. I want to use Ehn-sama’s recommendation to select talented people from the Estabul army. The Estabul army that has already been disbanded, so that they don’t exist to revive Estabul, will be integrated into the Roland army. And under Ehn-sama’s directing... This means, in truth, reviving Estabul will be impossible. Ehn-sama may be accused of selling her country to Roland. But, so what? Unless you’re saying we release the Estabul soldiers, reviving their country, just to improve Ehn-sama’s reputation?”

“No, that...”

But, Sion interrupted him.

“Claugh, this isn’t a game. As long as I am king, Estabul cannot be revived. I can predict that. As long as I am king of this country, I will definitely not allow Estabul to revive. But, in order to rope in Estabul, I have to get her

cooperation no matter what...”

At this moment, he moved his eyes away from Claugh, looking behind Claugh.

Looking at the person who had appeared behind Claugh...

Then Sion raised his voice slightly.

“No, if I say cooperate, it’s too light... Let me change that! I want to quickly use Estabul’s power. But, the reason why I’m doing that is to reduce the people who are sacrificed, even if it’s only by one. To reduce the sacrificed Roland citizens, even if it is only by one...”

At that point, a clear and gentle woman’s voice spoke from the hall’s entrance:

“Does the Roland citizens that Your Majesty speak of, include us Estabul people?”

Claugh hearing that, turned back in surprised. And he saw...

A beautiful girl who had deep blue hair that was rarely seen in Roland.

She had a pair of steady blue eyes, and gentle features. Her eyes emanated elegance and intelligence, showing a strength that a seventeen year old should not have.

She was the character that Sion and the others were talking about—the previous Estabul princess, Noa Ehn.

In the last rebellion of Estabul, she had been pained by the nobles lack of control to take people as hostages...

She was seen as the hero who had saved the people, by defeating the nobles by herself, going through the negotiations for surrender and successfully minimising the losses.

She was a talented woman who had become a noble of Roland was

welcomed to Roland...

On the surface, that was what happened...

Of course, reality was different.

She had protected the hostages from further harm from Froaude's plans for Estabul, knowing that she would be accused by many people, but to protect the citizens, she became a noble of Roland.

And because of that, her current expression was extremely serious.

She stared at Sion firmly.

"Please answer me, Your Majesty. Does the Roland citizens that Your Majesty wish to protect, also extend to the people of Estabul?"

Sion nodded forcefully, answering:

"Of course, Ehn-sama. Since I said Estabul would not revive, that means that Estabul would not be my enemy. You are my extremely valuable people."

But, Noa's eyes continued to remain fixated on Sion. As she walked nearer to him, she said:

"You want me to believe that? You have not only used Estabul people, but even Roland's citizens as your hostages..."

At this moment, Froaude interrupted:

"No, that was my own..."

But, Sion cut him off.

"Enough, Froaude. She is right. Even if it was something you decided on, the things that Roland has done to Estabul, are things that I as the king of Roland should be responsible for.

"But, if possible, I wish for you to believe in my sincerity. Believe in my feelings that I wish to protect the Estabul people... Trust me that I will not allow for any more fighting between our two countries. Even if you do not

believe it, there has been too many sacrifices. The long war has made us lose all resemblance of normalcy.”

Saying that, Sion closed his eyes as if remembering the past. Then said:

“Ehn-sama. In the past, I had a companion called Kiefer Knolles. That was a long time before I became king. Anyway I had a girl called Kiefer among my companions... She was a lively and clever person. She loved another one of my companion... I liked seeing the smiles of ‘him’, Kiefer and my other companions. Even though Roland was in a state of unrest, everyone could still be happy, they seemed to be blessed... When I was with them, I would forget all my troubles...”

Sion said, realising that he had a faint smile.

He remembered the figures of his past companions.

Kiefer, Ryner, Tyle, Toni, Fahl... he remembered the days with those companions...

Sion continued:

“At that time... I thought, it may not be bad if days continued like this... maybe this country doesn’t need to be changed. Only a fool like me worries over and thinks about how can this country be changed... in truth it probably is unneeded? Perhaps everyone doesn’t want it to change? That was what I thought. At that time we smiled happily, we were so happy that I had this thought. Because my treasured companions were laughing so happily, so... where did we need to change? I thought. Because everyone had their own happiness, they were smiling so freely. Even so, I only needed to protect the smiles before me... Wasn’t that enough? I only needed the power to protect my companions, that was enough... That was what I thought. But...”

Then he opened his eyes, looking at Noa who was standing beside Claugh...

“...Most of my companions died. Because of Kiefer Knolles’s betrayal. No, it should be said Estabul’s former spy, Kiefer’s betrayal...”

Noa hearing that, revealed a surprised expression.

“Then, Your Majesty hates Estabul people...”

But Sion shook his head.

“How could I? Kiefer is still my important companion. Although she is very far away now... To me, she is still my important companion, this has not changed. My companions’ deaths were indeed caused by her betrayal. But, she was forced to do it. She and her sisters were sent to Roland as spies from Estabul... but her elder sister was killed by the Roland Mage Knight Battalion, her younger sister was taken as a hostage... she became a double spy.

“She was always worried that her younger sister would be killed... So, she followed the Roland nobles’ orders... No, she took my brothers’ orders, so that she could kill me who was a hindrance to my brothers, and to trick the Estabul soldiers, she couldn’t do anything else. But, I don’t think that her feelings for that treasured companion were false. She was always laughing with us... I don’t think her smiling face was false.

“She betrayed her country, and betrayed us who were once her companions... I trust that she must have wanted to come to us a few times to beg for help. Although she was always smiling, but I trust that she wanted to be saved. But I... didn’t discover it!! And her younger sister had been killed a long time ago. She cried as she betrayed us, causing her companions to be killed, even causing her younger sister to be killed... ”

“It was corrupted.... This country was extremely corrupted. The lowly nobles, and my vulgar father... the mad war... so, Estabul will not be revived. I...”

Saying that, Sion stopped, then said:

“.....No, as long as I am king, I will definitely not allow for any conflict between Roland and Estabul. To me, the Estabul people are among those that

I want to protect. So, I wish for your help. So that I can protect this country from any inner conflict... to prevent outside invasions... I want to gain Estabul's help, Ehn-sama."

At this moment, Sion bowed deeply to Noa.

"Do I have your trust now?"

He said. Noa seeing that, frantically said:

"Don't be like that... Your Majesty is too kind... And you're doing this in front of your subordinates Field Marshal Claugh and Lieutenant General Froade... I don't have any problem with accepting or rejecting. I can understand Your Majesty's feelings very well. If I can help, I will do so."

Sion hearing that, raised his head.

"...That way, you will become a traitor..."

But Noa smiled.

"I was given that crime a long time ago. And, when I feel upset, Field Marshal Claugh will protect me like just now, so..."

Claugh heard that, and his face turned sour.

"Eh? ...So you heard it from the beginning?"

Noa hearing that, smiled happily, staring at Claugh as she said:

"Who told Field Marshal to speak so loudly..."

Then she turned to Sion again.

"Your Majesty, please rest assured. I will introduce the talented people in Estabul to Field Marshal Claugh."

Sion smiled when he heard that.

"Then I'll leave it to you."

He said.

And he believed, as long as Noa was willing to appear, there would be no problem.

She was clever and strong...

And...

When she looked at Claugh, there was a light in her eyes...

As long as these two people moved together, there would be no problem, he thought. If Roland's Field Marshal and Estabul's princess could keep up the good relationship...

The relation between the two countries could take a turn for the better.

Sion smiled and said:

“Uhn, things are like that, Claugh. The Estabul army will be taken in as well, Roland's military strength will increase. Until then, your work load as a Field Marshal will increase too...”

Claugh panicked when he heard that.

“Ah? W-wait... How did things turn out this way? This is too much. If I'm going to be busier from now, I may die! Talking about which, the other noble Field Marshals have nothing to do...”

Sion nodded, then turned to Noa.

“So that Claugh doesn't die earlier, could you recommend trustworthy and talented people from Estabul's side? Because I plan to make a person from Estabul the fourth Field Marshal of this country.”

In the moment Sion finished speaking, Noa revealed a shocked expression.

“Ah...F-field Marshal? An Estabul person?”

Sion nodded simply.

“Eh. Claugh, are you against it?”

But Claugh shook his head, and for some reason, looked very happy.

“No, but if I can split half of my work with that person, I wouldn’t have any protests.”

Noa heard that, but she was unable to believe it.

“B-but...”

But Sion interrupted her.

“That settles it. I am going to allow an Estabul people, and the talented people from Roland who have been bullied up till now, take over the important posts in the Roland army. I think all of the movements should be done now while the nobles don’t dare to act foolishly? So, there’s not much time. Settle this quickly. The two of you will head to Estabul lands immediately.”

So Claugh said happily:

“Yes. Since things have progressed till this stage, then let’s go, Noa. Sion, really, you always come up with interesting things...”

He said as he pulled Noa’s arm, making as to leave the hall. Noa seeing that, frantically said:

“W-wait, Field Marshal... How...”

But Claugh didn’t heed her.

“What’s wrong? Since that person said so, then it can’t be wrong. Then, Sion, we’re leaving? I will bring back a large number of people, don’t be too surprised at that time? At that time, I will hand the Field Marshal’s work to them, then go to Gastark.”

He said, forcefully bringing Noa away.

Sion smiled wryly when he saw that, turning to Froaude.

“Does that person really think that he can wave off the Field Marshal’s

work?”

But Froaude didn’t reply, only staring at Sion.

“...Was what you said real?”

“Eh? What?”

“About making an Estabul person a Field Marshal. Don’t you think it’s too early? Allowing an Estabul person take up an officer’s position... It is effective in stopping any rebellion from Estabul. But, the top of the army has privilege and authority, it seems to be a bit too much...”

But Sion shook his head.

“Didn’t you say it too? You said we already don’t have any time. So as to protect our country from the strong Gastark which has defeated Stohl and other countries, and other strong invasions, we need power. Roland needs to accumulate power. And we have to do in a short time. We have to become a stronger and wealthier country. Making amendments to laws that can allow people to be motivated to progress... We have to become a country where everyone can smile as they live. If we can become that before another country invades us... then we win. Until then, even if we don’t fight...”

Froaude’s eyes became sharp when he heard that.

“...As long as our formation is stable, we can invade other countries... When the talented people are gathered in this country, other countries will naturally crumble from the inside. I see. Decreasing the casualties to the least... Is this your decision?”

“Do you not acknowledge it?”

Froaude shook his head.

“No, minimising the casualties... Although it’s like that, but Your Majesty knows, if there’s any need, we have to go through some risks. Allowing an Estabul person to become a Field Marshal, if that works, it will have a large

impact. This will definitely benefit us to have sufficient power to invade other countries...”

That was right.

Allowing an Estabul person to become a Field Marshal was that valuable.

It represented—people from other countries could become Roland’s Field Marshal, even if it were people from countries that had lost to Roland...

This fact would decrease the enmity that other countries had. Even if they lost, Roland would accept them fairly. If they lost, only if they lost to Roland, there might be peaceful days awaiting them.

Even if they lost...

If it were for Roland, it might be a valuable battle...

If they could make other armies realise this, even if for a moment, then Roland would win.

But...

Frouade continued:

“Your Majesty is going to allow an Estabul person to become a Field Marshal, if this person attempts to rebel, then you have to kill him... You have to be someone who can make that decision. The shortest route to ruling everything. In the situation to reduce the casualties to the least... If you had to rescue the majority, you would sacrifice the minority. Your Majesty is someone who can have that resolve. If that’s so, I will follow Your Majesty’s orders. I... will proceed to Runa Empire.”

Sion stared at Frouade when he heard that.

“Proceed to Runa?”

“Yes. In order to construct the ideal country that Your Majesty wishes for, it might take some time? I’m going to stall Runa, so that we can have some

more time.”

Sion nodded.

“At the moment we cannot easily have any conflict with Imperial Nelpha or Runa Empire. After I became king, although I went to visit Nelpha, constructed good relations... but the alliance with Runa was done by the previous king... I think there is a need for me to confirm the other party’s intentions again, but...”

Froaude continued Sion’s words:

“And, according to what Duke Stearead whom I killed said, the nobles seem to have borrowed Runa’s power, attempting to assassinate Your Majesty. Which Runa noble contributed to this activity, which nobles have how much power... or even, this could be secretly done by the Runa king... We don’t know about these matters. But, we have to let them know, if they dare to act against Roland, they will have to pay a high price.”

But, Sion seemed to have think of something, thinking for a while before he spoke:

“This is a rather dangerous job. If you’re not careful, there’s no guarantee that you’ll make it back alive?”

So Froaude replied:

“As long as Your Majesty is unharmed, Roland would not be inconvenienced...”

Sion immediately interrupted him, saying:

“Didn’t I say it earlier? This country still needs you. If you die now, I will be troubled.”

Froaude was surprised when he heard this.

Then—

“.....I will keep that in my heart.”

Saying that, he put a hand to his heart, bowing his head.

Sion smiled and nodded when he saw this.

“Eh, then remember that. Then, you’ll go to Runa... And...”

At this moment.

“Your Majesty. The Silwelt House has followed your request, and is requesting to see you.”

A woman’s voice other than Noa’s, that sounded steady but clear spoke from the entrance to the hall...

Froaude turned his head when he heard this.

“Silwelt...? If I’m not wrong, this is the noble house that was recognised to be talented in the aesthetics like the Sword Family, and has a long history... I heard this famous house was not recognised by the previous emperor and was banished to a far place...”

At this moment, the owner of the voice appeared.

A straight back, black hair that was tied up neatly. The person was slightly older than Sion... perhaps around twenty years old? But, she had a style that was unlike that of her age.

A confident smile, steady and sharp eyes. Every movement attracted other people’s attention.

Her slim body was enclosed in a black outfit, and she had a special outfit that was made from what seemed like hard armour...

A huge spear was carried on her back.

Originally the rules dictated that no one could bring weapons into the king’s hall... But she brought the spear in without any change in expression. But, although she brought her weapon, she knelt at the entrance to the hall...

“I was unable to come and give you my greetings, please forgive me for that. Sion Astal-sama, I congratulate you on ascending the throne.”

Sion smiled when he heard that.

“I’ve waited for you for a long time. If I’m not wrong, you are... the Spear House...the current head of the Silwelt House, Tiilnawest Silwelt, right?”

The woman remained in her kneeling position and said:

“Yes, please call me Tiil.”

Sion nodded:

“Then, Tiil. I have waited for you for a long time. How is it? Being banished by the previous king for so long... During that time, have you worked hard, and become stronger than before?”

Tiil raised her head... then, as if looking at a place in the hall... a distant corner, she said:

“Of course. Our current power is not worse compared to the Eris House which protects Your Majesty... So I brought my spear...”

Sion smiled when he heard this.

“Lucile, did you hear that?”

But no one replied.

Sion shrugged:

“Never mind, even if you don’t answer...”

Then he stared at Tiil and said:

“Then, show me your power.”

So Tiil smiled lightly.

“I see. This ability, this courage... Roland has really produced a good king... Lucile, I can understand your reason to choose him. Then...”

In a moment, her body moved up.

The large spear curved.

She took action with an aggressive air.

Shortening the distance between her and Sion in a breath, she thrust the spear in front of her—

But...

“Tiil, you’re still too slow.”

Suddenly, a man appeared behind her.

Golden hair, and dashing looks that a human would not seem to have. Eyes closed tightly.

A beautiful man.

It was a strange beauty, that humans should not have that would make people have an odd feeling...

He reached out his arms, as if going to hug Tiil from behind, stopping the spear.

A smile appeared on his face...

“It’s still not good. Your spear can’t pierce me...”

He murmured softly, as if going to kiss Tiil’s ear. The fluidity of his movements made it seem like he had been there since the beginning.

No, he had been there.

This man... The head of the Sword House that was responsible for generations for protecting the Roland king, Lucile Eris, had been there since from the start...

But, because this man didn’t want to be seen by others, so no one could see his appearance.

To this man, that was that.

Completely erasing his presence...

He even vanished from human's notice...

It was like a monster.

At any time, Lucile seemed to be a monster that was very powerful. Tiil wouldn't have enough strength to fight this monster, but...

Tiil said:

“Your underestimation of the enemy, will be the reason why you are defeated this time...”

Saying that, she grabbed Lucile's arm hard.

In a moment.

Two men with the same expression as Tiil appeared from behind Lucile and stabbed their spears, approaching quickly...

“Die! Lucile Eris!!”

The men shouted.

What an aggressive speed. Their movements should have surpassed the power of the strongest soldiers in this country—the Mage Knight Battalion?

But, Lucile didn't even turn back.

No, he didn't even take the other party into account.

He only smiled lightly, then brought his lips near to Tiil's ear again...

“Oh, are these your brothers? What admirable movements... Then let me...”

In a moment.

The hall was filled with a large presence.

A presence that wasn't existing just now was rapidly unfolding...

Sion momentarily felt as if he couldn't breathe.

He was pressured by the strong presence that Lucile was emanating that he couldn't say anything.

This was a presence that couldn't be released by a human.

A beast...

No, it wasn't as simple as a beast.

It was a demon...

The demon whispered:

“.....Can ‘that’ be broken?”

In a moment, Tiil's face twisted.

Then—

“...Ah, urgh... s-stop! Wayne! Sil!”

She shouted.

Tiil's two brothers immediately reacted to her voice, stopping exactly before they pierced Lucile...

But, the two men who were attacking others were pale. They were sweating heavily, the faces had frightened expressions because of their fear...

Lucile laughed happily when he saw that.

“Congratulations for saving your own lives. Tiil, what an accurate judgement. You are indeed stronger than back then. Your younger brothers are talented too. Uhn, but they're not up to my younger sister's standard... Is it worth referring to? Sion.”

Sion nodded when he heard this.

“Eh. I already knew that they were very talented people...”

Saying that, Lucile's figure faded again.

“That’s good. I especially like Tiil. I trust that she can help you a lot? Then get along well.”

Saying that, his figure disappeared completely.

Sion watched this strange spectacle. After the strange scene disappeared, he spoke:

“So you knew each other?”

Standing behind Tiil, a black-haired youth called Sil that seemed a lot like Tiil retorted quickly:

“We don’t know each other! Who knows that lowly person who uses that sword which is lowly compared to the spear, but calls himself the strongest person...”

At this moment Tiil stopped him.

“Shut up, Sil! Remember you’re in front of His Majesty.”

“Ah, urgh... I-I’m sorry, Onee...”

But, the man called Wayne who looked to be slightly older than Sil stopped him.

“It’s not Onee-san, Sil. It’s Master.”

“Y-yes, Onee... Master. I’m sorry.”

Tiil seeing that, bowed her head slightly in helplessness.

“Allowing Your Majesty to see something embarrassing... My younger brother Sil is still immature...”

But Sion smiled wryly:

“He’s immature, but he moved agilely... How amazing. I understand your abilities. Then, about what I raised... Lucile and you are?”

Tiil had a slightly troubled expression when she heard this.

“...We fought once in the past. Eh, that was when I was twelve years old...”

The result?

Sion didn't want to ask.

The ending didn't need to be said out loud.

The Sword House Eris House...

But, the current Lucile couldn't even use a sword. Not only that, Sion hadn't even seen Lucile use a sword before.

No matter how many strong enemies appeared, he only moved his hand slightly... his enemy's head would be separated from the body, flying in the air.

Tiil said:

“Not only my brothers... How the people of the Tiil House, to me, Lucile-sama has always been the goal that I have been working towards...”

She said.

Eh, this was something to be expected.

As long as people who practised aesthetics saw Lucile, there would probably be two types of people? If they didn't worship him, they would fear him?

But, from Lucile's fighting style, he seemed to prefer people to fear him...

Sion said:

“Eh... Lucile is your goal... But, this is troubling. If the people around me are monsters, I will be unable to breathe...”

Tiil smiled when she heard this.

“Please rest assured... I will never be able to reach his level...”

For some reason, she said this happily.

And after hearing her say that, the brother called Sil frowned unhappily, and

Wayne had a mild but calm expression.

It seemed like Sil was really an immature person, and hated the Eris Family.

This seemed interesting...

At this moment, Sion suddenly had an expression like a mischievous boy, as if he had thought of a new prank.

“Ah...I thought of something that would make that person hate me again...”

He said softly. Tiil raised her head at this.

“Ah? May I ask, what is it?”

But, Sion shook his head quickly.

“Ah, no, it’s nothing. It’s nothing to do with this. About that... I’m very clear about your ability. I am different from the previous king, the more talented the person, the more I will be prepared to use this ability... Everyone knows this, right?”

Hearing that, Tiil, Sil and Wayne knelt down again.

“Yes. The Silwelt Family has always wished for a master like this.”

Sion nodded when he heard this.

“Then raise your heads. There is no time to be spent on pleasantries. It will be very busy after today.”

There was not much time left.

They had to gather the talented people in the country.

They had to gain not only the Estabul army’s support, but even the Estabul citizens’ support.

In addition, the elusive nobles who were foolishly moving in the darkness...

He had to completely change the laws and measures that only benefited the

nobles.

He had to start with changing the home affairs.

And it had to be before the other countries invaded.

Before Roland entered a chaotic state.

And while they were preparing the work, there were many things that had to be done within the country...

They had to make the other countries be stunned at Roland's change.

At this moment, Sion looked at Froaude who had been looking at the fight...

And, Froaude seemed to realise Sion's thoughts as he nodded.

"I think that this is a good idea. Then, I... should prepare to leave for Runa?"

Saying that, he bowed to Sion again, leaving the hall.

After watching him leave—

"Then, let's begin?"

Saying that, Sion looked at Tiil, and the Silwelt brothers again.

"I plan to send you on missions outside the country. The main reason why I chose you was, of course I believed in your strong power. But I feel that the real reason why you are suited for this, is because you do not know how to use magic. Even if you are captured outside, you would not leak our country's secret magic out... In contrast, if you are captured as hostages, I will not save you. I cannot allow other countries to find out our weaknesses."

Hearing that, Tiil raised her head slightly.

"I see. That country... will be initiating war with us Roland Empire?"

War...

Sion's eyes narrowed slightly.

"...Perhaps it will turn out that way? Although I don't wish for that to

happen.”

The world had already started to turn in that direction.

Although no one wished for that...

But the world was already proceeding in that direction.

And...

There was no way to escape.

Sion looked at Tiil again.

“Do you know a country called Gastark?”

He asked.

Chapter 2: Not have a dream

She asked, why?

Because it was really too strange.

She was clearly a traitor.

Because of her, everyone had died.

Everyone was dead.

She lied to him, Sion, Tyle, Toni, Fahl, everyone...

So, someone like me shouldn't be treated so gently.

But...

He looked at me, and laughed with the usual lethargic expression, but filled with a caring gentleness.

And he took my place in prison.

Ryner had his usual lazy smile, and smiled from the other side of the iron bars.

He told a lame joke, as he smiled.

I don't understand.

Why? Why? Why?

I...

I clearly caused the death of everyone...

She spoke with a trembling voice:

“Why, Why... Why is Ryner willing to do this for me...? Why are you so caring to me? I... I betrayed Tyle, Toni and Fahl... I caused them to be killed...”

But, he interrupted her.

“You’re wrong.”

He said.

Then looked at her with that sleepy, lethargic expression.

“The ones who killed aren’t humans, but monsters, Kiefer. War is a kind of monster. This country is a kind of monster. Lust is a kind of monster. And I too...”

At this juncture, he stopped, then smiled at her.

That smile made her want to cry.

Why does he look at me with that kind of expression?

I’m clearly a traitor.

I betrayed the friends that I liked.

I betrayed the person I love.

And... The one that she wanted to save, her younger sister that she had sacrificed so many people for had already been killed...

Even her older sister had been killed cruelly before her eyes...

What value do I have?

My existence is meaningless.

There is no meaning for me to live on.

I am clearly a despicable person who cannot save anyone, but will betray my companions for nothing and cause them to be killed...

But, he still had a very caring expression as he looked at her.

“But, Kiefer is human. So, Kiefer doesn’t have to worry too much. Understand?”

He said.

In that moment, she understood everything.

She understood why she liked him so much?

Understood why she loved him so stubbornly?

Because he was so caring that it was unbelievable.

She had always misunderstood. She had always thought, because he was unmotivated, so unmotivated that there wasn't any need for anyone to be wary of him, because he always made people feel comfortable, so she would like him, but...

She was wrong.

It was actually because he was so caring that it was unbelievable.

And...

Because deep within that caring smile...

There was a deep wound...

He said:

“And I too...”

He said he was a monster.

At the same time he said this, he smiled really gently...

But, that...

What he said—

“But, Kiefer is human.”

Kiefer is human!!

Her tears nearly burst out.

Feeling the loneliness in his heart, her tears nearly flowed out.

He was in the bottom of a place that was unbelievably dark... but, he still

smiled.

He smiled at me.

Because I am a monster...

Because I am a monster...

This smile, she had seen it several times.

The first time she said she liked him, he had an expression that was filled with resignation and smiled.

Because I am a monster...

He gave up on everything, and curled up in the layer of darkness by himself, rejecting the whole world.

Only because he did not want to hurt anyone.

He didn't want to hurt anyone important to him.

He smiled in resignation.

How many layers of pain are hidden under that smile?

How many layers of grief are hidden under that smile?

Because I am a traitor... So I can't love anyone, I can build friendships with anyone. She had thought that...

But, he had told himself that he couldn't come into contact with anyone from the day he was born.

Because he didn't want to kill, so he couldn't approach anyone...

So, she reached out to the metal bars, grabbed his clothes, and pulled him over.

Then forcefully overlapped her lips with his.

That was a promise.

A promise that linked him who didn't interact with anyone to her.

A promise to never let him be alone.

Even if he locked up his heart, and not accept anyone...

A promise that she would bring him back again.

This was the promise that she made in her heart, by her own will.

She stared at him and said:

“Ryner isn't a monster. At least I don't think you are a monster. I will live on. Thank you, Ryner. And...I will definitely...”

At this point, she didn't need to say anything.

There was no need to say it.

But in her heart, she swore.

She would save him.

From that layer of darkness...

She would save him from the bottom of the layer of darkness...

At this moment—

“Kiefer!! Kiefer Knolles!”

There was a shout, momentarily jolting her awake.

She opened her eyes.

And she discovered, what was before her eyes wasn't the scene she had with Ryner two years ago...

Reality lay before her eyes.

Lights were fired.

Followed by sounds of explosions.

Then...

People died.

Every time a beam of magic flashed, people would die subsequently.

People died.

People perished.

Kiefer stared at this scene.

Not far from her, the fighting soldiers seem to be acting out an act, simply collapsing one after another.

She had seen this scene before.

Her comrades...

The scene of her comrades' heads and bodies continuously jumping apart...

That scene was like hell.

She didn't want to see that kind of things anymore. She had clearly thought that, but she was still in that kind of situation.

War.

Blood splattered, magic was chanted, people died.

...Death.

Seeing this, she frowned.

Right before her eyes was the rising country, Gastark's soldiers. And, the army's power wasn't what a rising country should have...

No, it could even be said it was till an abnormal stage.

Because, near to the north of the Menoris Continent, the soldiers of the military country Stohl that was said to have the strongest and largest army,

was now losing their determination, and escaping...

The difference between the two armies could be easily seen.

She looked straight at this scenario with her red eyes.

In these two years her red-hair that was the same colour as her eyes had grown to shoulder-length, her slim body was now wearing light armour that belonged to Imperial Stohl.

At this moment, the voice spoke again:

“Kiefer?! Let’s escape! This place isn’t going to hold much longer!!”

The squad leader of the troop she belonged to shouted, preparing to escape.

Kiefer replied:

“...But, if we escape, this village... Shouldn’t we let the citizens evacuate first...”

The captain’s face twisted in response.

“Leave this village!! Our main body is already coming over! Even the Mage Battalion is reaching. We could even possibly be caught up in the crossfire between the Gastark army and the Mage Battalion! At that time...”

But, at this instant Kiefer didn’t want to hear it.

Because she knew what he was about to say.

--At that moment, this village would disappear in an instant. If they didn’t escape, they would get caught in the crossfire... He wanted to say this.

The captain ran off with a pale expression. The other team members followed behind him, escaping together...

Kiefer sighed when she saw this.

“Yeah, I can understand everyone’s feelings of escaping...”

She murmured softly.

The squad that Kiefer belonged to, had never received any vigorous army training. Because they were the furthest from the front lines, a village situated relatively inside the borders of Stohl...

By right, the Gastark soldiers would not attack this place. So, it became the camping site for Kiefer's team. In addition, there were many civilians here. The front line should be somewhere further away.

But, the Gastark forces were too strong. They broke through the front line, and attacked here...

This shouldn't be something that would happen.

They couldn't possibly defeat Imperial Stohl that was said to be the strongest country in the northern part of the Menoris Continent that no country could match up to, and reach here in a single breath.

She could understand that her companions had felt shocked at this development, and struggled to escape.

But, Kiefer looked at this with a steady expression.

“...As expected.”

Yes. To her, this development was within her expectations.

She only needed to look at this and understand.

Due to the distance from the front line, the country did not put the squads that had the important task of sending supplies to the front line any battle training. From this fact... this outcome could be expected.

The supplies that Stohl sent to the teams were gone.

As long as there was anyone with a little fighting power, they would be sent to the battle field...

Then they would be killed.

She stuck out her tongue and said:

“Eh~~ this situation is bad. I invested in the wrong country... I initially thought that picking the strongest country in the north Stohl... perhaps I could find some information about Ryner’s... Alpha Stigma...”

That was the reason why she was here.

Alpha Stigma.

What was that?

That was the only reason why she picked Stohl.

No, ever since she handed the task of rescuing Ryner from prison to Sion, and left Roland... She only lived to find out the entirety of this matter.

To save Ryner.

To save him... from that oasis of darkness...

On the way north from Roland, she had chosen Runa, Cassla and Veiohl and other countries, at last she entered the strongest country out of these countries, Imperial Stohl.

Her intention was to gain information.

At this moment, she had a troubled expression, and she looked at the Gastark army that was kicking up clouds of dust and approaching.

“Indeed, I chose the wrong country...”

She didn’t think that a large country like Stohl would be embroiled in this kind of battle. And it was the state where they were being wiped out.

If she wanted to leave Stohl, she had to do it now.

“Kiefer Knolles, second-grade soldier, died in action in Hoins village...”

If the country announced that, then leaving this country would be easy, right?

If she wanted to desert, she had to do it now.

Around her were the village people, everyone was crying and shouting,

trying to escape the village. If she took off her armour, and escaped with everyone...

At this moment, the sound of a horn was sounded from behind her, she turned her head when she heard it.

At some point in time, the army of Stohl had appeared...

“...”

Seeing this, she was momentarily speechless.

It was an unbelievably large army.

The army expanded in a horizontal fashion, there were more than a hundred thousand?

This was the power of the Imperial Stohl.

According to what the captain said earlier, this large army had a reputation that just with one squad, they could block one thousand of the opposing Mage Battalions.

The strength of the army was abnormal.

One the other hand, there were thirty thousand Gastark soldiers.

If they clashed, Gastark would probably be destroyed in an instant?

The villagers cheered.

“They’re here! The Stohl army is here to save...”

But, they stopped.

An arrow pierced through the shouting man’s head...and he collapsed.

That arrow was shot from the Stohl army.

In the next instant, the Stohl army shot a large number of arrows.

And those were arrows that depended of the wind manipulation of magic, to increase their range.

A large number of arrows surpassed the village, and flew to the Gastark army...

But, there were hundreds of arrows that landed in the village.

Kiefer quickly dodged the arrows and said:

“...I really chose the wrong country.”

She looked around her, the villagers screamed as they became targets, and frowned.

But things were at this stage, she was powerless too. Protecting herself was already taking up her energy...

Kiefer continued to run forward.

She attempted to leave the village...

Arrows rained down.

Every time it caused the death of the villagers.

Women, men, elderly...

Kiefer was unable to save them. Because she did not have that luxury. If she relaxed, she would become the next target of the arrows. Under this situation...

Kiefer still had a sorrowful expression.

“...I’m sorry, but I cannot die here, I have to keep to the promise...”

And at this moment...

There was an arrow from the front.

In order to dodge the arrow, Kiefer threw her body to the side. Her eyes followed the movement of the arrow...

In a moment, she saw the scene behind her.

She saw the place where the arrow she dodged was heading to!

There were two kids in front of her. They were girls. Two young girls. They were sisters?

The girl that seemed like the older sister was frantically pulling her younger sister's hand and running...

There was a rut beneath their feet.

The arrows flew over.

The arrows flew over.

Several arrows shot towards their feet...

But the sisters continued to run frantically.

Kiefer spoke when she saw this:

“I’m sorry. I currently have no way to save ...”

But—the younger sister fell.

The arrows flew over.

The older sister seemed to notice, that arrow was shooting towards her younger sister.

And, in the urgent moment, she blocked her younger sister...

In that moment...

“I OFFER THE CONTRACTED WORDS, LETTING THE SLUMBERING MALICIOUS SPIRIT DWELL WITHIN.”

Kiefer chanted. Loosening the restrictions on her mind, her body's speed increased.

That was the magic that her older sister had used to protect her and her younger sister.

Lately, she had learnt to use this magic. How much later was that than her older sister who had learnt this magic and age thirteen? Her older sister was

certainly a genius. And, Kiefer's magic efficiency would never compare to her older sister's.

But, she moved to the sisters with her increased speed.

She dashed to the older sister who seemed to be protecting her younger sister from the arrow, and grabbed the younger sister's body, dodging the arrow...

And.

“Urgh...”

Her right leg suffered a blow.

Then, she hugged the sisters, rolling on the ground and stopped.

She immediately raised her head.

“Are the two of you hurt?!”

But the sisters were so terrified, they seemed like they were about to cry...

Kiefer asked loudly again:

“I asked if any of you are hurt?”

The girls sniffled, and shook their heads quickly. Kiefer nodded when she saw this:

“Good! Then escape quickly!!”

Saying that, she made to stand up, but a stab of pain passed from her right leg again...

“Ah...”

She looked at her leg. An arrow was buried in it...

The wound wasn't deep. It didn't seem to have hurt her muscles or ligaments...but it would be hard for her to bring the girls and escape under this situation.

If there was no way to escape, then she had to quickly remove the armour, and find a place to hide.

A place where arrows would not reach.

A place where the fires of war would not reach...

But, there was no one to guarantee that their lives would be safe from harm.

“Ah, really, this is terrible... Why do I have to do this? Things about sisters is really my weakness...”

She said as she looked around, looking for a place to hide.

First she had to use the houses as shields, and leave the centre of the village that had supplies, even if it were a little distance was also fine...

But, her emotions stopped at this moment.

“.....Uh!”

Kiefer looked at the sky, and was shocked speechless.

The light from the sky was suddenly blocked...

Darkness descended from the sky.

The whole sky was covered with despair.

Arrows—

An innumerable number of arrows covered the sky that she could see...

“It can’t be?”

She said as if moaning.

Even if they wanted to escape now, it was too late to escape to the houses that could act as shields. If it were only her, she had a slight chance. She could use magic to increase her speed... but, with these two girls...

Kiefer narrowed her eyes at this situation.

“...Oh dear, this is really bad...”

She looked at the descending arrows again.

Death was right before her eyes.

Death had a strong presence.

But, she was unable to move. Only lightly sighing...

“...It seems that I am unable to keep my promise.”

It was always like that.

She thought.

She was always unable to protect what she truly wanted to protect...

Her older sister, younger sister, everyone...

And Ryner too...

She had thought that she could save them a second ago, but in a moment the chance slipped through her hands again.

Because she had resigned herself. Because of resignation, she told herself, if she saved one side, the other had to be sacrificed.

Because she became resigned very easily, she told herself, for her younger sister, she had to sacrifice Ryner and Sion and the others.

In the end, she couldn't save anyone.

It was always like that.

I can never save anyone.

It's always, always, always, always like that...

“I'm already tired of that...”

She said.

She hated her weak self.

If it were her older sister, even in this situation, she would be able to think of a plan, and go past the difficulty?

If it were Sion who was proclaimed to be a genius in the academy, perhaps...

No, if it were Ryner...

If that were the case.

“There’s a way!”

Kiefer shouted.

“I can do it too! If I die here, how can I save Ryner! I can do it! I can do it! I can do it!”

She said, then looked back.

“You two, form a line behind me! I may not be able to cut off all the arrows. So you have to form a line... and hide under my armour!”

After she ordered the two girls, she looked in the direction of the arrows again, her fingers danced in the air, forming glowing words in the air.

It was Estabul magic.

The magic of her home country, the Kingdom of Estabul.

“I OFFER THE CONTRACTED WORDS...”

This was the highest offensive grade magic that she could use.

But using this magic, how many arrows could she burn?

How many... of the thousands of arrows could she deflect?

But, she had no other choices.

She tried to attract the arrows. So that she could use the magic once and cut

off the most number of arrows...

The moment the arrows were almost reaching her, she chanted:

“RELEASINIG THE SPIRIT OF LIGHT DANCING IN THE SKY!”

In a split second, a membrane of light appeared above her head, and a beast that was like a dog appeared...

The beast of light formed.

It flew straight towards the arrows.

And...

The arrows, using the magic that had blessed it with power, broke through her magic's flames.

“How can that...”

She didn't even manage to deflect a single arrow.

All the arrows glided towards them...

In a moment, she spread her arms, attempting to stop the arrows from reaching the girls behind her.

She spread her arms as wide as she could...

The arrows made a whistling sound in the air, preparing to pierce through her body.

At this moment...

Her vision was suddenly blocked.

A stranger stood in front of her.

“Heh!”

The man waved his sword.

And it wasn't a normal sword, it was a sword that was so long that it was

weird, and it was about three times of Kiefer's height.

No, Kiefer didn't know if it should be called a sword? Because the length of the sword didn't seem like what a normal person could wield... And the blade of the sword was black, the black blade had several purple streaks, drawing a strange design, but had some organization.

The man lightly swung that sword...

In an instant.

The man cut through the numerous arrows that were about to pierce Kiefer and the others... No, he cut through the hundreds of arrows flying towards them.

He cut the arrows that were magically reinforced, that even her magic was unable to block...

“...”

This strange scene made Kiefer feel surprised.

No, it wasn't.

It was the man's appearance that made her feel surprised.

The man placed the strangely long sword on his shoulder. But, although the man was well-built, he seemed a little slim, it was unbelievable that he could carry that kind of sword.

He had slightly wavy tea-coloured... or it should be said slightly pinkish-coloured hair that was rare.

And what was most attractive were those sharp but confident eyes.

Eyes that seemed as if they could suck people in.

They displayed a strong determination, passionate wildness...

The man used those eyes to look at Kiefer, then he looked around.

“That armour... You are a Stohl soldier? But, I don’t see any other soldiers. Stohl didn’t let the villagers evacuate before they shot out so many arrows?”

Kiefer heard that, and stared at the man...

“From your tone, you are Gastark soldier?”

The man nodded carelessly and replied:

“Ah, eh, I suppose so.”

Then he looked around again.

“There aren’t any presences of ambushers... That means, the Stohl soldiers really abandoned the villagers, and deserted. But you stayed on to protect these girls... Are you an idiot?”

He suddenly said.

“Eh? Uh... i-idiot? W-why do you...”

But, Kiefer was interrupted again.

“Didn’t Stohl give up on this village? But you stayed on, what can you do? You’re only wasting your life? You can’t save anyone.”

Kiefer frowned when she heard this.

This man was right.

But, because he was right, so...

“...What do you know? This is why I hate wars.”

She said seemingly unhappily.

To save many people, it was necessary to sacrifice a few.

The truth was probably like that.

But, I can’t say that Onee-san’s death was unavoidable because of this.

I can’t say my little sister’s death was unavoidable.

So...

“...So I hate wars...People like you who only use numbers to look at the lives and deaths of people, only doing what you want, and thinking that you’re everything...”

“What? You’re clearly the soldier of the military country Stohl, but you hate war?”

Kiefer hearing that.

“Of course!! Who likes wars!”

Kiefer shouted uncontrollably.

But the man mildly stated:

“Heh. You’re good. You’re shouting at me and waiting for me to reveal a weakness, right? When you’ll escape with the children... You’re quite talented. In addition the magic you used... That has a large difference from Stohl’s magic structure, right? That means, you’re not even Stohl’s soldier.”

“You... that means, you clearly knew...”

But, her words were interrupted by the man again.

“Then where are you from? You’re clearly not a Stohl soldier, but you appeared in a war between Stohl and Gastark... to save a civilian, and nearly lost your life... The conclusion I made is, you are an idiot. To protect others, you will throw away your life without hesitation, that is only what an idiot will do...”

Kiefer glared at the man when she heard this.

These words were really evil.

What was wrong with sacrificing her life for others?

Even if she sacrificed her life, she wanted to help others, what was wrong with that thinking?

Onee-san died to protect me.

Ryner went to prison for me.

And because there's someone like that...

Kiefer glared at the man viciously again.

Because there were selfish people like this who only thought of themselves, there was war...

But, the man suddenly laughed happily...

“But I like idiots like this.”

He actually said that...

Towards this sudden change—

“Eh?”

Kiefer uttered in surprise.

The man was still smiling.

“I hate wars too. Blood, tears, sadness, things like that, I do not like them. But...”

At this moment, several men wearing black cloaks suddenly appeared around Kiefer and the man...

Soundlessly, and without a presence.

It was certainly surprising.

Kiefer had been monitoring the change in their surroundings, planning to escape when the man was unprepared.

But, before the black-cloaked men surrounded them, she didn't even register their presence.

Monsters...

She thought.

This wasn't her first time experiencing that feeling.

The Mage Knight Battalion.

In the past when she was surrounded by the Roland's Mage Knight Battalion,
When she was attacked by the Estabul's Mage Knight Battalion,
She had the same feeling.

But, these Mage Knight Battalions knelt in front of the man.

And...

“The preparations are completed, Your Majesty.”

Kiefer heard that...

“Your, Your Majesty?! That means, you...”

But, the man shrugged in reply, the spoke to the men in black cloaks:

“The protection of the civilians?”

“It's complete. Only those three are left.”

“Then the current situation?”

“The mage archers of the Stohl army have retreated. They will be launching a large-scale magic soon.”

Kiefer shuddered when she heard this.

Large-scale magic referred to a destructive magic operated by more than ten Mage Knights, that was used in war.

The power was greater than normal, and sometimes one hit could cause hundreds of deaths.

And, in general, any country's large-scale magic would not need much time to activate, before the two armies clashed, every Mage Knight Squad could

only launch one or two hits.

And generally speaking, when large-scale magics clashed with each other, the two would cause much damage as they came into contact with each other...

And, the number of Stohl and Gastark soldiers were not the same.

It would be possible for a few large-scale magics to affect this place?

Until that time, one hit could destroy this small village.

At this point, the black cloaked man said:

“So, please retreat Your Majesty. For Your Majesty to personally come to the dangerous front lines...”

But the man shook his head, then said:

“No, I was planning to use ‘that’ in the first place, so there’s no need.”

In a moment—the black cloaked men kneeling around them panicked.

“Your...Your Majesty, you...”

“Your Majesty, please perish that thought! Do not use ‘that’...”

“No, I will use it.”

The man smiled with an innocent expression like a child’s.

“But...”

The black cloaked man wanted to say something, at this moment—

“You don’t have to say anything else. Didn’t I say it, this is what I have decided since the beginning? If we do this now, it will have a large effect in the future. You should understand that too?”

So...

“...”

The black cloaked men for some reason, remained quiet with a frustrated

expression.

But, Kiefer didn't understand.

What was he thinking of doing?

Kiefer asked:

“.....Hey, I don't understand... What is ‘that’?”

So the man turned back to her.

“...Ah, I'm sorry. We were half way through our discussion just now. So, I said I hated wars...”

“No, I'm not asking about that!”

But, this man didn't hear Kiefer's words, pointing at the black cloaked men.

“I don't like my companions dying.”

Then he pointed to the girls behind Kiefer.

“I don't want to see children dying too.”

Lastly he pointed to Kiefer.

“It would be a waste if a beauty like you died, I definitely wouldn't want that to happen... So, I hate wars.”

Up until that point, the man narrowed his eyes sadly. His expression continued to change. In one instant, he was smiling innocently like a child, in the next he had a fearless smile of a conman...

Then like now, he lowered his eyelids as if he were really sad...

The man said:

“But... as long as there are countries, wars will occur. As long as there is a system of countries, there will be conflicts. I always thought, if that's the case, then what should we do to reduce the sacrifices, even if it's only by a little? What should we do, to make it so that people who are unhappy are

reduced? I was always troubled by this.”

Saying that, the man frowned as if he was really frustrated by this, then he looked at Kiefer again.

“...Didn’t you say earlier, you hate people who used numbers to consider the lives and deaths of people? But, how should we save people? If we don’t use numbers, then what should we use as a yard stick to save people?”

To this problem...

“...”

Kiefer was unable to reply.

What should be used as a yard stick...

At this moment, the man said:

“Some people will probably say. At least you have to save the people before you... That is enough. Some will say, if you can protect the important people before your eyes, then that is enough... But, I don’t want to save just the people before my eyes. Not only the people of Gastark, even Stohl... No, not only that, save everyone in the Menoris Continent, let war disappear from this world. That is my dream.”

He said.

His words were filled with charisma.

His goal was to become a king that would rule everything on this continent, to build a peaceful world where there was no war.

And... Kiefer stared at the man, stared at the king of Gastark, and said:

“Then, you say to destroy war, so you triggered a war... But, isn’t this a little contradicting? Your dream is a dream that is built on killing people and gathering corpses. To be more concise, you are a king, but the ones fighting are the soldiers, the ones suffering are people. The king only hides in a safe

place, waiting leisurely to reap the fruits of war. Isn't this method just wishful thinking?"

But the man nodded when he heard that.

"Yeah, that's right. So I will use this here..."

Saying that, he lifted the sword from his shoulders, and gently placed the blade on his palm.

Blood flowed out from his hand...

Blood seeped into the purple patterns on the blade...

The purple pattern seemed to absorb that blood, and slowly turned red...

Suddenly, the blade started to pulse.

Thump thump thump, it beat strongly as if it were alive...

"Th,that is..."

When Kiefer murmured softly, something happened.

The space before her eyes twisted.

The surroundings of the flowing sword seemed to twist with the sword at the center of it...

The surroundings twisted.

Then, suddenly from the sky...

"Contractor... I reply to thou request."

A voice descended from the sky...

A quiet, quiet, quiet...

But, it was a voice that had a very strong presence.

The voice resounded in their minds...

Kiefer heard that.

“That, that is...”

She couldn’t stop trembling.

Because she had this kind of experience in the past...

This...

It was the same as when Ryner’s **Alpha Stigma** went out of control...

The voice spoke.

The voice spoke.

The voice spoke from somewhere below.

It directly resonated in her mind.

But, that voice was slightly different from the voice that spoke when Ryner lost control. The voice Ryner released was a voice that created unease in people.

And, this voice had a strangely strict tone, it was a voice that created fear in people...

The voice spoke:

“Respond. Respond. Tell me thou price. If that is the case, I will release my power.”

The man smiled when he heard this and said:

“Eat my left eye, then! I need power.”

Kiefer heard that—

“...Ah? What does that mean? Left eye...”

Then, the black cloaked man beside her, replied with a tight expression:

“That sword... That sacred sword is something that only descendants of the Hero can use... It can give His Majesty large power, but in return, every time His Majesty will lose an ability.”

“Ability? You mean...”

Then black cloaked man nodded.

“His Majesty has already used that sword twice before, and sacrificed his right leg and sense of smell. Didn’t you tell His Majesty, ‘The king only hides in a safe place, waiting leisurely to reap the fruits of war. Isn’t this method just wishful thinking?’

...But, if it is that kind of king, we wouldn’t follow him. His Majesty uses his own life as a sacrifice... attempting to save the world.”

Then, the man raised his sword and said:

“That is a beautiful thing. I am going to snatch many lives away. The price is only a left eye... It’s too cheap. Even so, I will still use this sword. To save more lives than I can snatch away.

I will become the king of the world—

To save everything in this world!”

He said.

He had a strong determined conviction in his words.

A king's determination.

This man was definitely Gastark's king.

The king raised the sword higher.

"Come, give me power! **Glovil**, release!"

Then, the voice descended again...

"...Contract completed. Releasing power."

The sword released a light.

It released a red... red...

A blood-red light.

At the same time, several large lights illuminated from the Stohl army before them.

The large-scale magic was completed.

Then it was released.

An unbelievably strong destructive power was heading here...

With only one hit, hundreds of lives would disappear? No, that power had the power to destroy this whole village.

But, the black cloaked men surrounding them did not show any signs of fear.

They only watched the king in front of them.

The king only looked ahead.

With his sharp eyes...

His vision went beyond the approaching large-scale magics, to the even further army...

He stared hard, as if wanting to engrave this sight into his eyes...

“.....This sacrifice will not be worthless. I will never forget this scene. My sins will never disappear. I am a murderer. A murdering king. If anyone wants to curse, then curse me.

But, even so—

Even so, I will still proceed...

Come...”

Saying that, he swung his sword hard, and stepped forward.

Then.

“Destroy everything!”

He swung the sword.

After which.

Something unbelievable happened.

The world's scenery changed.

It disappeared.

Everything disappeared.

The strong power destroyed the whole world...

The village, land, magic, and even lives were wiped out.

Of the hundreds of thousands-strong Stohl army, tens of thousands had disappeared.

The victory could be determined from this.

An explosive power.

The large-scale magic lost its meaning.

Like that time.

Like how the Mage Knight Battalion were destroyed like toys... when Ryner's eyes lost control.

That kind of despair...

That kind of power that made people think of the power of god...

There was no such belief in god in Kiefer's home country of Estabul. There was none in Roland and Stohl too.

But, this strong power made people think of the power of God.

A strong fear.

A strong dread.

A strong horror.

Was it God...

Or was it the Devil...

That was a power that humans couldn't have.

Because of that...

There was a need for a price to be paid.

Ryner's body was engulfed in that deep layer of darkness...

And the Gastark king...

Blood spurted from his eye with a strange sound.

“Urgh...”

The king softly groaned, pressing a hand to his eye, the black cloaked men panicked when they saw this.

“Your Majesty?!”

They made to move over...

But the king stopped him.

“It’s fine. More importantly, find someone to pass the message on to Stohl. Tell them, if they don’t want to experience another attack like that, then surrender. This way, the war with Stohl can stop. Uh, if it doesn’t end here, then the tens of thousands of lives would have been sacrificed for nothing.”

The black cloaked men made a move after they received the order.

After making sure of that, the king turned back...

Kiefer looked at his face.

Blood continued to well out from his eye...

But, he still smiled.

He smiled as if he couldn’t feel any pain.

He had a sad smile that seemed to mock himself.

Kiefer saw that—

“Do you... regret it?”

And the king shrugged his shoulders, like he did earlier, then said:

“People who kill and don’t regret are trash.”

This sentence reverberated in Kiefer’s heart.

This man’s sentence had touched Kiefer’s heart.

Because everything he said was straight to the point, simple and not fake...

She felt that she could understand why Gastark had become strong.

The power of that sword...

No. Not that. The price that sword demanded was too great. It couldn't be something that could be used continuously.

The true power of this country was the king's charisma.

That was what Kiefer felt.

The country ruled by the strong, determined king.

The country ruled by the king who understood people's pain and conquered that pain.

The man spoke.

He looked at Kiefer.

"Hey, I said it before... I don't hate idiots like you. People who can't even save the people before them, who else can they save? If you only want to save someone... only save someone very important to you, perhaps that is enough. But even so, if you want to save even more people, then come with me. Depend on me, Riphal Edea..."

Saying that, he extended a hand to Kiefer, at this instance...

The black cloaked man appeared again, and told the king... Edea:

"Your Majesty, the Imperial Stohl has surrendered. The king of Stohl has come forward to show that he is surrendering..."

Edea nodded when he heard this:

"I will go to see him. Stabilise Stohl's internal matters as soon as possible. Try to avoid meaningless conflict, and proceed swiftly."

Saying that, he looked at Kiefer...

"Come along too. I will treat your leg wound for you."

But, Kiefer shook her head. Then said:

"Thank you for your invitation, Your Majesty, but... now, I still have

things... to do in Stohl, so... but, one day, I will head to Your Majesty's side.”

Yes, her words and tone differed from earlier, they were carefully chosen and respectful.

Edea narrowed his remaining right eye when he heard that.

“Things to do in Stohl... is that so? Eh~~ What kind of person are you? I’m really interested, but... Since you say one day you’ll depend on me, then I will not force you now. Then, see you.”

Saying that, he left swiftly.

After Kiefer watched him leave, she stroked the heads of the trembling girls, and told them, the war had already ended.

Then.....

She left.

She headed in a direction away from Gastark and Stohl.

First, she had to go to the neighbouring country to investigate, what kind of country was this country called Gastark.

If she entered Gastark but knew nothing about it, then she would be at a disadvantage.

What kind of country was Gastark?

What was the status of that man called Edea? What was he?

And... that sword?

Immediately, several key words appeared!

‘The descendant of the Hero’.

‘Contract’.

‘The voice from the sky’.

‘The voice that was like what Ryner released’.

Kiefer smiled.

She had a lead.

She felt.

The answer must be here.

The answer to save Ryner.

She stopped... Then pulled out the arrow in her leg, staring at that arrow.

It was an arrow stained with her blood.

If it wasn’t Edea who had saved her, she would have died then. Not even saving Ryner, she could have died on that battle field.

Kiefer narrowed her eyes, thinking about Edea’s words.

“If you want to save even more people...”

But.....at this point she shook her head.

“.....Saving the world? What a strong charisma. The charismatic king, and a charismatic country... But, to the current me, saving Ryner is more important than saving the world. So...”

At this moment, she threw the arrow on the ground, turning around...

“.....I’m sorry, let me use you for a while, Riphal Edea...”

After muttering that, she walked forward.

A startling large amount of fresh blood was left on the battle ground, and...

An unimaginably large number of corpses...

This was the first place she had met with him.

She who had always been cursed as a traitor and...

The Gastark King who could be called the ‘One-Eyed Hero King’, the first place they met.

And this meeting would...

The location and time changed...

Runa Empire.

In the Rajit Village near the boundary of the Imperial Nelpha, in the bushes not far from a house...

Ryner and Ferris... and the youth Arua who had not opened his eyes and was being carried by Ryner, hid in the grass patch. Ryner peeked at the situation of the village from the bushes, and frowned as he spoke:

“Ah~~ Like what we guessed, the Runa soldiers are lying in wait for us...”

The scene in the village was very weird.

Like what they saw in their previous visit, the villagers were hidden in their houses and didn’t dare to come out, in addition, there were several armed soldiers wandering around in the village...

To add on, there were two wearing armour different from the normal soldiers... There were some people with strange armour that was made up of crescent shaped-like rings, that seemed like that would cut if touched...

They already knew, that was the armour of the Runa Mage Knight Battalion. These two people were standing before the house that Ryner and the others were looking at, as if protecting it.

Ryner saw this, and had an even unhappier expression as he said: “Are they waiting for us? It seems, rescuing Kuku will be quite troublesome...”

They were here for this.

To save Arua’s childhood friend, Kuku.

From the looks of the underhanded methods of the Runa soldiers, if they left Kuku here, she would definitely be harmed.

It seemed that was true...

At this time Ryner narrowed his eyes, looking at Arua on his back.

An innocent face.

That face would be clouded with a layer of grief. His parents were killed before him... Not only that, grief and despair would twist his face again.

Like his past self...

“...”

Ryner’s expression became even more incomparably tired.

Perhaps she noticed his change in expression? Ferris nodded too.

“Yes, saving Kuku will be difficult. But, we can’t leave Kuku here? If Kuku is killed too, then we cannot get the reward for saving Arua’s life. This way, our dream of using that reward money to organize an extravagant dango feast will...”

“Ah, is that where the problem is...I want to ask you, ‘us’? Why does it seem like your dream has become my dream?”

Ferris replied simply:

“What did you say? Didn’t you frequently say that? ‘The wish of my princess, is also my wish. As long as I can see the happy expression of the princess, I am contented even if I die’.”

“Who said that!! Enough, talking to you is like saying having half a sentence appear even though I said nothing... Putting that aside... What do we do now? Even if we can deal with those normal soldiers, but I feel that those Mage Knight Battalions are troublesome...”

No, this wasn’t about whether it was troublesome.

The reason why they were called Mage Knight Battalion... That meant that they were the strongest team in this country.

Their fighting abilities were abnormal. Normally no one would want to face these monsters as enemies?

But... Ferris said:

“Mm-hmm. But, currently there are only two Mage Knights confirmed, and the only other Mage Knights situated here should only be these two. We can assume the other Mage Knights are looking for us who took Arua. This way... Currently, the only two here, should be nothing?”

She said it very simply... But, Ryner shrugged when he heard this.

“No, saying something strong like that in front of the Mage Knights, there probably is only you. Anyway I’m carrying Arua too...”

At this moment Ferris interrupted him.

“Even if you’re carrying him, by your strength, you can block two or three Mage Knights, right?”

But, Ryner said again:

“Uh, maybe, but... how should I say this, I’ve been suffering from a lack of

sleep lately... I don't really want to move..."

Ferris tilted her head suspiciously when she heard that.

".....Eh? What are you trying to say?"

Ryner, with an expression as if he had been waiting for this, nodding forcefully.

"So, eh, how should I say... I'm thinking, if Ferris who is not taking the Mage Knight Battalion seriously, can save Kuku by herself, then I wouldn't need to carry Arua and run around, that would be very relaxed..."

But, he stopped here.

Ferris slowly unsheathed the sword at her waist and asked:

"So?"

Seeing this development, Ryner sighed.

"...The above is my imagination. I don't want to die, so I will work hard."

Saying that, he turned his eyes that were bloodshot because of tiredness and exhaustion, to look at the village.

The security was heavy indeed, but... it wasn't until that stage where it was impossible to break through.

Swiftly scanning once, he saw two Mage Knights and five ordinary soldiers.

If Ryner had their capabilities, and save the hostage—

"Uh, it should be an easy victory?"

He rotated his neck. Then he used his sharp eyes to look at the Mage Knights and the Runa soldiers.

"...If Kuku is still alive and hiding in the house, then that would be good."

That was where the problem was.

If the Runa people knew the high value of Kuku being a hostage...

Perhaps they had arranged Mage Knights to stand outside Kuku's house, set traps, but kept Kuku somewhere else?

No, it was still good if she were imprisoned.

She could have been killed.

In the end the Runa people clearly killed Kuku... but told Ryner and the others:

“If you want to save that girl, listen to us obediently.”

That was the technique nobles were best at.

Like how Kiefer's younger sister had been killed in the past...

But at this moment Ferris said:

“That is not a problem. Even if Kuku isn't inside, as long as we interrogate the Mage Knights or normal soldiers ‘within an acceptable range’, they will tell us where they have hidden her.”

Ryner smiled wryly when he heard that and looked at Ferris.

“Interrogating... You're amazing. Uh, you're right. If those nobles are always acting by their own desires, we have to change our methods too. If we don't let them understand that we are not always in the situation where we are being beaten upon, then they will be even more arrogant. Then let's move?”

Saying that, Ryner stood up.

This moment alone caused the Mage Knights to react...

“Ah, as expected of Mage Knights. Then, what battle plan shall we pick?”

But Ferris said:

“Does that standard of enemy need a battle plan? Go.”

Saying that, she leapt forward with an astounding speed.

Shortening the distance between her and the Mage Knights in one breath, she

swung her sword...

The Mage Knights frantically unsheathed their swords, preparing for battle.

But, it was clear, their movements couldn't match up to Ferris's speed.

A Mage Knight suddenly felt something was off.

“En...”

As he prepared to shout, Ferris's sword struck him on the head, shutting him up. The Mage Knight collapsed on the ground... Although he had not fainted, but he was seriously wounded, and his movements had slowed.

The other Mage Knight jumped back, attempting to increase the distance between him and Ferris, but Ferris chased after him with twice his speed...

Her sword swung.

The two exchanged two, three blows at a speed that couldn't be seen...

But, the Mage Knight was slowly pressed back by the heavy power of Ferris's swordsmanship, he continued to retreat, he retreated until his back touched Kuku's family's wall, then...

“Urgh... How powerful... Soldiers! Call the back-up! We will block this place off! Call the rest of the Mage Knights...”

He shouted fiercely.

But those soldiers didn't hear his shout.

Those five soldiers were already on the ground...

“Ah, I'm sorry, I've already dealt with everyone...”

Ryner said with a lazy expression. Then he used a karate chop on the Mage Knight behind Ferris who was attempting to chant a magic incantation, making him faint, then...

“Heh, that's it. Hey, Ferris, this side is done. You should end yours too.”

Then Ferris nodded.

“Then, I’ll be serious?”

The Mage Knight heard that—

“Ah?”

He let out a foolish shout, at this moment, Ferris’s movements became faster. She swung her sword even more fiercely, in comparison, her earlier movements were a fake front...

The Mage Knight raised his sword in a moment, but the blade was broken into two.

The difference in power was too great.

In the time that Ferris was fighting, she had skillfully hidden the Roland crest imprinted on her armour, preventing the other party from seeing it.

But the difference in the two people’s abilities were really obvious...

Ferris swung her sword smoothly, slicing towards the Mage Knight’s neck, then said:

“That’s that, you’re not my opponent. The man behind me is stronger than you too. And that man is a pervert who doesn’t differentiate between man, women, old or young, he even chases after men! If you love your life and your chastity, then please tell me where you have hidden Kuku!”

She finished speaking. The Mage Knight’s face stiffened, and looked to Ryner...

Ryner seeing that, said:

“You really believe that?! Speaking of which, why do I always have to act out those perverted characters... Urgh, forget it, if this is threatening, I’m not protesting...”

He muttered unhappily. At this moment, the Mage Knight replied with a stiff

expression:

“In that house...”

But Ferris swiftly rejected it.

“You’re lying. I can’t feel any presence. That house is empty.”

She was right. Ryner could feel it when he approached the house. There was no presence in Kuku’s house. The house wasn’t very big. Kuku was probably not here?

Ferris said again:

“If you lie, and want to use that time to escape, then that is a waste of effort. Not only that, the more you lie, the worse the situation will become. Ryner, come over. This man seems to want to play with you.”

Then, the Mage Knight’s expression contorted with fear again, staring at Ryner.

Ryner couldn’t very well say—“I really don’t want to play with you...” at this moment.

Ryner replied with an expression as if he wanted to cry:

“Uh... Ah, eh, that... Alright, then let me play with you for a while...”

In the instant after he said that, he felt that the usually emotionless Ferris, had a slight smile...

Ryner momentarily felt like he had lost something important, and cried in his heard.

Uh, let’s not think about such trivial matters for now...

Ryner walked towards Ferris, and said:

“Ne, for your own good, we can probably kill you, and interrogate the other

soldiers. I know that you have received vigorous training as a Mage Knight, and so you will not submit to interrogation... but, anyway those normal soldiers will reveal information very easily. And you have to die for no reason here? Why not you live on, then rebuild yourself..."

Then, halfway through, suddenly...

His head went flying.

Ryner's eyes widened when he saw that.

"Ah..."

But, his words were cut off.

Something had cut the wall of Kuku's family behind the Mage Knight into half. After the Mage Knight's head was cut off, it headed towards Ryner's head...

"Damn it..."

Ryner tried to dodge.

But, that thing extended towards his neck swiftly.

Ryner moved his body, but it was too late.

That thing was fixed on Ryner's throat...

He was done for...

He thought.

His brain was going to go flying...

But, at this moment, Ferris grabbed Ryner's hair from behind, and pulled him down, allowing him to dodge this fatal blow.

In the next moment.

Something surprising happened.

Kuku's family's wall split, then... it rapidly froze and shattered.

The pieces of the frozen house scattered, reflecting the sun rays, flashing a golden light...

What a strange scene.

The head flying in the air.

The Mage Knight's head...

But there wasn't any blood splatters.

Because the portion of the neck of the Mage Knight that had been sliced horizontally, no, his whole body was frozen, so there was not a single drop of blood splashing out...

Ryner had seen this before.

“Oh no...”

He said as if groaning, then he held on to the sleeping Arua on his back, and jumped back with Ferris... then looked ahead again.

And, a girl and man walked out from the destroyed house...

One of them was a tall man called Sui. But talking about tall, he was actually only slightly taller than Ryner by a little. He seemed a little timid, and was always smiling, and had a steady feeling.

The most special trait about him was his hair...

Tea-coloured... no, it should be slightly pinkish, a hair colour that was rarely seen.

And by his side was his little sister Kuu who had the same rarely seen pink-coloured long hair.

She was roughly thirteen or fourteen years old?

Her bangs were cut nearly, and she wore a black dress outfit.

Her pretty features and slender eyes made her seem like an adorably pretty

girl.

And, she held a scythe in her hands...

That was not a normal scythe.

Because this scythe had decapitated the Mage Knight and froze the wall of the house, causing it to be destroyed cleanly.

That large scythe was made from an unknown blue metal...

That was... one of what Ryner and the others called the 'Heroes' Relics'.

It was a weapon that contained a strong power that people did not know of.

In the past Ryner and Ferris had been pressed back by this scythe's power, and were nearly killed.

They were completely unable to match them.

That scythe had such a strong power...

At this point Sui said:

"Yo, isn't this Ryner-san and Ferris-san? I didn't think that we would meet here... We have quite the fate."

He said with a gentle voice. But Ryner glared viciously at Sui when he heard this.

"I don't want to see you at all..."

But, Sui stared at Ryner with his slender eyes that weren't known if they were opened or closed, then replied:

"Really? How cold. But, I am rather interested in you, Ryner-san. The wielder of the special **Alpha Stigma**... Until now, I have hunted down a few Alpha Stigma wielders, and crystallised their eyes before snatching them... But, clearly, you are different from the other Alpha Stigma wielders... Your power is too strong... Even my Rhule Fragmei **Elemio's Comb** couldn't match you, so..."

Saying that, he raised his left hand.

By right, his left arm should have been gone.

When Ryner lost control of his **Alpha Stigma**, Sui's left arm and the Heroes' Relic **Elemio's Comb** vanished.

But, Sui raised his left arm.

But, that was not a flesh arm. It was a prosthetic, a limb made from metal.

And there were several strange stones made from an unknown substance on the prosthetic limb.

The limb had an unknown structure, and Sui was able to move it like a real limb, freely moving, raising it high. Then he said:

“...And after you awakened and lost control, you could still regain consciousness. This has never been seen before. What are you?”

He asked. But, Ryner lowered his eyelids.

“If I knew, I wouldn't have to suffer so much already.”

He replied unhappily.

What was he?

He had been asked this question many times, until it was overused.

What was he?

Was he human?

Or was he a monster?

And...

What was I born for...

Does my existence have any meaning?

But Sui spoke with a surprised expression:

“...Really? But the child you are carrying... That, is an **Alpha Stigma** wielder, right? You didn’t crystallise the other **Alpha Stigma** to steal the power of their eyes, but you protect, what meaning does this have? Do you know the real method of using the eyes...”

Before Ryner replied, Ferris said:

“Oh, your topic is interesting. You actually know that Arua is an **Alpha Stigma** wielder...”

Sui hearing that, replied:

“Obviously? Because we are here to hunt **Alpha Stigmas**... But, I didn’t think Ryner-san and you would bring the child with the **Alpha Stigma** here, this was beyond our expectations. It seems a little challenging...”

Saying that, he frowned.

“With you here... I’m unable to force that child’s **Alpha Stigma** to awaken, and steal it. Honestly, the power that your eyes have after awakening, that is something we are unable to match up to...”

At this moment, Ferris said again:

“And... You even let us Roland people know the fact that you are secretly dealing with Runa Empire. You obtained the information about Arua being an **Alpha Stigma** wielder from Runa, right?”

Sui smiled when he heard that.

“Wrong. So, things are really bad. I am very interested in Ryner-san’s **Alpha Stigma**, but... regrettably, I need you to die now...”

Saying that, he smiled again, then continued:

“Kuu.”

Then, Kuu nodded.

“...Yes.”

She raised her scythe...

At this point Ferris shouted:

“Ryner!”

“Understood!”

Ryner nodded forcefully when he heard that, running forward. As he ran, his fingers danced in the air, writing glowing words...

“I OFFER THE CONTRACTED WORDS, LETTING THE SLUMBERING MALICIOUS BEAST DWELL WITHIN.”

In the moment he finished chanting, his body’s speed increased.

He left his original place in a breath...

But, Sui’s voice sounded from behind him.

“You can’t escape from Kuu.”

He said gleefully.

That was right, Kuu, without a change in expression, chased after Ryner who had increased his movements with magic...

This was power gained from the power of the scythe.

That scythe seemed to be able to gift the wielder with enormous strength...

She used an aggressive stance, swinging the scythe down towards Ryner...

He was unable to dodge.

Although he was unable to dodge... Ryner looked back.

In a moment, Ferris jumped in front of him...

Ryner smiled when he saw that.

“Ok. You thought the same as me.”

But Ferris didn't reply him, she grabbed her sword... and blocked Kuu's blow.

But, because she was unable to take the scythe's enormous strength, her body was blown over in a breath.

No, it should be said she used her opponent's stance, to jump over? Kuu's strength was too abnormal.

Ferris jumped back, as if she were thrown back by that abnormal strength... Ryner grabbed Ferris's shoulder, jumping back.

In a moment, the two greatly increased the distance between them and Kuu, landing directly. But, they didn't stop moving.

“Ryner, let's separate. It will confuse them. The meeting point...”

“Where the carriage is hidden.”

“Yes.”

Saying that, Ferris left the village, disappearing into the forest to their right.

Kuu chased after Ferris. After Ryner checked the situation, he looked behind him...

But, Sui didn't chase after him.

No, it seemed he didn't plan to chase after him.

That was to be expected? Sui and Ryner's speed couldn't be compared.

Perhaps he knew, so after they increased the distance, he would never catch up, so he gave up?

Kuu probably could not catch up with Ferris.

No problem.

It seemed like they could escape from this.

He thought.

Ryner made to run forward again...

But, at this moment Sui who was relatively far behind suddenly shouted:

“Ah, Ryner-san! Before we separate let me tell you! That youth’s childhood friend, is now imprisoned in the villa of this land’s noble!”

Ryner turned back...in Sui’s direction.

He couldn’t see his expression...

But, Ryner knew what expression Sui had.

It was the usual steady expression that was laughing.

A laughing expression as if he could see through Ryner and the other’s thoughts...

Sui continued:

“I will await for the two of you there.”

Ryner frowned.

“...Bastard!”

After he cursed, he continued to sprint ahead.

Chapter 3 - Have A Cursed Dream

Warm sun rays shone down.

It was a grass plain far away from the streets.

The clouds floated in the sky, a gentle wind caressed the grass plain.

Looking at this peaceful scene...

“Ah, this scene makes me even more sleepy...”

Ryner who had lately not been sleeping muttered to this scene. Then he said:

“Ah, even if I don’t see this scene, I can always have a huge dream, I wish that I can sleep more than twenty hours out of the twenty four hours in a day, don’t even talk about two hundred hours, these few days I haven’t been sleeping at all, what do you think?”

Once again, he told the youth who seemed to be sleeping very peacefully beside him.

Of course the youth did not reply...

Ryner shrugged, then looked around.

But, a peaceful view lay before his eyes.

“...”

Ryner was silent for a moment, then he said:

“...Ferris that person is slow. Kuu couldn’t have caught up to her...”

But, he shook his head following that.

“No, that person definitely wouldn’t let herself enter that situation...”

He said.

No, if the opponent caught up to her...

Then, at this point Ryner gave up thinking.

Because no matter what it was not helping.

He looked at Arua, then frowned.

The situation was quite undesirable.

Sui and Kuu and Runa had joined hands, clearly wanting Arua. It was like that earlier, if Ryner wasn't be Arua's side...

They would definitely force Arua's **Alpha Stigma** to lost control, then steal his eyes...

He thought of the previous time they had fought against Sui and Kuu, Sui had said:

“It's rare to meet **Alpha Stigma**. Because that is something quite valuable. I wouldn't let this opportunity slip away. I will let your eyes crystallise, then steal them.”

The crystal that Sui spoke of, seemed to be able to let the eyes of the **Alpha Stigma** wielder release energy and lost control...

Then Sui had taken out something like a precious stone to show Ryner, saying:

“You don't even know about this crystal?”

At the same time the crystal he spoke of was like a precious stone.

Then the instant, Sui had thrown that crystal, calling ‘resonate!’...

Ryner's eyes started to lose control...

Ryner thought of the scene then.

At that time, he attempted to destroy everything again.

All things—

All living organisms—

And, even Ferris who was by his side was...

This again.

These eyes attempted to...

Steal everything.

To him...

At this moment Ryner—

“...”

He pressed a hand to his eyes, without speaking.

He pressed forcefully, forcefully...

But, he used a lazy voice to say:

“...Really, what is this thing? He says it’s a crystal... Then, are my eyes some kind of crystal? If it is stolen from my body, will they become crystals? But, after my eyes are stolen, what will become of me? It seems I will be blind... But, if my eyes are stolen, then I can become a normal person...”

At this moment, Ryner’s hand pressed down even more forcefully. He pressed his right eye hard...

“...If it were that easy to get rid of...”

Then, Ryner stopped. Then he smiled lightly as if he were tired, he raised his head to look at the sky.

“If that would really make me more relaxed... then that would be too easy... I’m willing to try a few hundred times.”

He uttered. But, no matter how much he wanted to destroy these eyes, no matter how much he wanted to gouge them out, those eyes were simply unharmed in the end.

He didn’t know why it would turn out this way, but these eyes seemed to be protected by an unseen power, it was unharmed in the end...

Then, how did Sui and Kuu steal them?

They had given him an answer.

Let the eyes lose control, then steal them. It seemed that as long as the eyes lost control, they could directly gouge them out.

Let the eyes lost control...

At this instant, Ryner looked at Arua sleeping in front of him.

Then—

“...That way... will you be saved? Or will you die? I should have asked this earlier. If you can be saved, before you hurt anyone... before you are hurt, I will help you gouge your eyes out...”

Even though matters weren't so serious, these eyes eventually brought about harm.

Because they were born with these eyes... they were looked down as monsters, his parents were killed before him... now, even his childhood friend was captured as a hostage...

At this point, Ryner frowned.

“Speaking of which, things have really become troublesome. We have to save Kuku, but... if Sui and Kuu are looking after her... then even if we have a battle plan, the difference in our skill levels are too great...”

Then at this moment...

“...Eh.”

Suddenly, the youth groaned softly.

Ryner heard and said:

“Ah? You're finally awake?”

The youth tried to open his eyes, then perhaps because he was looking at the

sun, he closed his eyes because of the brightness... Then, slowly reopened them again.

Ryner looked at those eyes.

Although it seemed blurry, if one didn't look carefully it couldn't be seen, but... there was certainly that.

A red five pointed star.

Like Ryner's eyes, the cursed mark that everyone was fearful of...

At this moment—

The youth sat up, looking around.

“...Ne, eh... Where is...my...father and mother...?”

He asked.

But Ryner didn't answer him.

“Good, it seems that you are awake. Then let me ask you. Do you feel any pain?”

Arua heard that, then he shuddered, then glared at Ryner...

“...You, who are you! Father and mother... father and...father...”

But, he suddenly stopped. His whole face twisted in pain...

“Ah, urgh, ah...”

He trembled.

Ryner knew the reason for this.

He probably had remembered?

The image of his father's head before him...

“Uh, Uaaaaah~~ He, he was killed... he was killed....Ah!”

He screamed.

He screamed as if he were mad.

That was a natural response. His family were killed before him, and it was his parents.

But, Ryner stared at him, half-lidded, without a single ounce of interest.

Arua's cry was even louder. He cried as he yelled as if he were mad...

“Because of, of me... Because of me, father and mother...are dead... Ah, uh... No....no...no... everyone... I...”

At this moment, he glared viciously at Ryner.

“...You, you, you killed...killed my father and mother.”

Saying that, he suddenly stood up, his arms crossed, preparing to chant...

But.

“Too late.”

Ryner immediately grabbed Arua's arm, and pulled him on the ground. The magic was disrupted.

Arua rolled on the ground, collapsing, staring at Ryner hatefully.

“...Why, why... why do you have to do this... I... What did I do!”

He shouted at Ryner...

But, Ryner shrugged, not speaking.

Arua cried as he said:

“No more... I don't want it... why did it become like this... Because of me, because of me, father and mother... why did it turn out this way... I..... No.....no.....no.....”

Saying that he buried his face into the ground, sobbing uncontrollably.

Ryner seeing that, frowned as if he was unaffected.

“Then, you want to escape? But, where will you run to? Do you want to die? I won’t stop you. That’s up to you. If you can be saved because of that, then perhaps that would be good.”

He told the youth.

And Arua lifted his head, and glared at Ryner again.

“You... You want to kill me, right!! You... because I am a monster... So, father and mother died... If you want to kill me then kill me! I am a monster! If that is so, then just kill me! Someone like me... a monster like me, has no meaning in living...”

But, Ryner interrupted him.

“...Yeah, you’re right. Perhaps there’s no meaning in living. But...”

At this moment he used his right finger to lift up the eyelid of his right eye...

In a moment.

The red five pointed star gave out a strong glow, appearing in his eyes...

Arua revealed a surprised expression when he saw that, wanting to say something. Ryner interrupted him again.

“...What you are thinking of now, I have thought of that hundreds of times before. I thought, I have no meaning in living on! Because of my existence, many of my important people have been hurt...and even killed... and I’m seen as a monster, and isolated and looked down on by everyone...”

Why do I have to be here?

Why does someone like me have to be created?

I cried, shouted, but, I didn’t get an answer. But...”

At this moment, Ryner turned his head to the side as if troubled.

“But, every time I think of that, there is always someone who wants me to live on. Even though he knows I am a wielder of Alpha Stigma, but that

curious king still wants to trap me, and some people who want to persuade me, and tell me I am not a monster...

Not only that, lately there is a person who always says I am her slave, and her sole interest lies in bullying me...

Every time I think of these people, my heart will weaken.

I will think, maybe there are some things that exist for me to live for...

Maybe living on isn't wrong...

Then...then, those people that treasure me and think that I am very important... they want to build a world where no one has to lose anything, then I..."

Up till there, he frowned even harder, and scratched his head as he said:

"Ah, I seem to be saying strange things. Ah, anyway, what I want to say is..."

At this point, Arua stared at Ryner with a stunned expression.

"On-onii-chan is... like me... then, it was Onii-chan who saved me..."

After he finished muttering—

"But, but... I already don't have... I don't have anyone who wishes for me to live on..."

But, Ryner told him:

"What did your father tell you before he died?"

In a split second.

"Ah..."

Arua made a sound of surprise.

Before Arua's father died, he had yelled desperately.

He wanted Arua to live on...

He said, his death wasn't because of Arua...

Perhaps Arua recalled those words? His face started to twist in pain, tears started to fall from his eyes...

But, Ryner continued:

“And, the one who requested me to save you from the Runa noble, is your childhood friend, a girl called Kuku.”

Arua's eyes widened when he heard that.

“Kuku?! Kuku is here...”

Ryner shook his head.

“She's not here. She has been caught as a bait to attract you, she's now imprisoned in a Runa noble's villa. I have to save her, but... what about you?”

Arua hearing that, loudly said:

“I, I'll go to save her too!”

Ryner laughed when he heard that.

“If that's so, then you can't die here? See, death is a very serious thing. Just thinking of simply dying, you realize that there are still many things for you to do... it's troublesome, isn't it? Even if you don't die, I haven't been able to sleep lately, and I'm so tired now... Like that, since you're already awake, guard duty is passed on to you. I've reached my limits, let me sleep for a while.”

Saying that, Ryner lay on the grass...

Arua panicked when he saw that.

“Eh? Eh? Wait...didn't you say you're going to save Kuku...”

But Ryner continued to lie there and said:

“No, no, before that, I have to wait for my companion to return. So, when that person returns wake me. At that time we can go and save Kuku...”

Then, Ryner suddenly stopped talking.

In a moment, a plan to save Kuku surfaced in his mind...

He thought about the source of the problem again.

Sui and Kuu had locked on to Arua as their target.

If separated from Ryner, Arua could be forced to lose control, and his Alpha Stigma could be stolen because of that.

That meant, as long as the two of them were locked on to him, Ryner and Arua could not separate.

That meant, they had to bring Arua along to save Kuku...

But fighting those two and protecting Arua at the same time, was really...

Frankly speaking, as of Ryner and Ferris's current strength, fighting with Sui and Kuu was no easy task.

If they could add someone who had a strong fighting power as well...

At this moment, Ryner sat up, staring at Arua.

“...Strong fighting power? Ah~~ If we start training now, how much time would that take...”

Arua widened his eyes when he heard that.

“Eh? Eh? What?”

But, Ryner completely ignored him, crossing his arms, pondering.

“Eh, because there is **Alpha Stigma**, so he should be able to use normal magic immediately... if we leave the supporting task to him, but...”

Arua had a surprised expression as he looked on.

“That... Onii...”

At this moment.

“I’m called Ryner Lute. You can call me Ryner.”

“Then, then, Ry...”

But, Ryner interrupted him again.

“Ah, no, call me sensei instead. We don’t have much time, so this problem of mentality is important too.”

“Eh? Sen.....sei? That means.....”

Ryner stood up and looked down at Arua,

“Alright. Let’s get started.”

On hearing such a thing, Arua now had a definite bewildered expression,

“Well, I’m not exactly sure what is going on, so.....”

Then Ryner started,

“Well, erm, as there is not enough time, I’ll make this short ok? Just now, you said that you wanted to save Kuku right?”

“Eh? Yes. That’s right, I did say that but.....”

“So in other words, you’re going to help us save Kuku right? But, you’re weak. And won’t be much of a help..... erm, how do I put this across to you. A long time ago, Germer..... ah, by the way, Germer was my master. She said this to me, you know. Erm, it goes something like this.....”

At that moment, Ryner looked up at the sky, as if attempting to quickly recall what was being said to him, and in a monotonous manner,

“..... ehh..... *“You want to protect someone when you have hardly any power? A brat like you, stop saying such stupid things! For you guys who are about to be sent to hell, you don’t have the luxury to be thinking about other people. From now on, you should only be worried about your own lives. If*

you want to escape this place, at the very least, you need to attain enough power to stay alive in my hell before you can even think of that!"..... something like that I think?"

On hearing that, Arua began,

"What, what a scary teacher....."

At that instant, Ryner's face twisted in recollection of more of his unpleasant past.

"Well, tell me about it. Anyhow, the first time when we met..... when she first introduced herself.....

"I am Germer Kleisrole. For this coming one year, this is the name of your god. Remember this well. My orders are absolute, if you dare go against it, I'll kill you with no hesitation." That's how it went."

Arua shivered,

"Ki, kill..... you? Even for a threat....."

But Ryner shook his head with a serious expression on his face.

"That was definitely no threat. She was serious when she said that. Ferris had also..... ah, Ferris is the one who should be arriving soon..... my partner I guess? She also held a sword to my neck and said something like *"It seems like you really want very much to die?"*, and you can see the seriousness in her eyes..... women can really be terrifying....."

He said it with a tragic-looking face.

For some reason, Arua looked intently at Ryner's tired face with a great deal of respect in his eyes.

"Ryner-sa..... no. Sensei, it seems like you have been through a lot. And for a weakling like me to say..... that I can just throw my life away like that..... I'm so sorry. But, from hereon, I'm going to do my best. Sensei is going to train me up right? In order to save Kuku..... I'll answer to Sensei's

expectations, and do my best, so please stop making such a sad-looking face."

What a thing for him to say.....

And furthermore, Arua was staring intently at Ryner. It was real respect that was embedded in those eyes.....

And Ryner began.....

"Well..... erm..... was that really something worth respecting so much?..... Well, fine. Then, first of all, let me talk about the fundamentals of magic, so listen up....."

Arua nodded furiously,

"Yes sir!"

And he looked at Ryner intently with a pair of absolutely serious eyes.....

Ryner then,

"..... somehow, it might be nice to have a disciple....."

He wasn't really dissatisfied with this, it seemed.

And then,

"Well now, let's get started."

In high spirits, teacher Ryner Lute started his first lecture in magic fundamentals right in the center of a grassland.

"Well firstly, this is probably how it's done normally in the military with regards to magic training..... but in order to make it easier for a child to understand....."

Ryner stopped to think for a moment..... and then gave a slight knock to Arua's head,

"Whenever you want to think about something, what do you use?"

Arua tilted his head to one side and replied,

"Thinking..... about something? Erm, probably I'll use my head....."

"Isn't it? We use our heads to do that. Well, actually, what we use is the brain inside the head, and normally we use it to think about stuff and to give orders for moving our body..... but as a matter of fact, this brain is habitually lazy, doesn't use much energy, and is mostly sleeping. In this sleeping brain, if we could just awaken a few certain parts of it, we'll be able to see the invisible flow of energy embedded in this world."

As he said that, Arua looked around his surroundings.....

"Ah, are you referring to those glittering fluffy golden stuff flying around in the air that we can see when we concentrate our eyes?"

What a way to put it.....

Ryner snapped his fingers and said,

"Exactly. That's correct. Well normally, it would take a person some amount of time before he can see those glittering fluffy stuff. In order to awaken the brain, he will need to undergo meditation training and the like..... and that will take him at least a year, I think? As for us, thanks to these special **Eyes**..... we can see them easily. In other words, we can skip a year's worth of training that a mage soldier undergoes. Excellent excellent. And since you've already grasp the general concept of the energy flow, we can now proceed to the second year of training."

The lesson was moving at an incredibly fast pace.

That's the power of the bearers of such **Eyes**.

To others, Arua might even be called a genius.

Having a greater power than others.....

However.....

Ryner would never call him that.

Since he himself had never once wanted to be called a genius.

Because in the former Roland, where others were clamoring for the name of a genius, he, not even once, desired that name.....

But still, Ryner continued in rather high spirits.

"Well next, we're going to move on to the topic of what exactly are those glittering fluffy stuff..... and like I said earlier these are the energy flows of the world however..... according to the researchers, they are termed seirei (spirits)....."

As he said that, Arua's eyes started to light up.

"Really? Really? These are spirits-san!?"

But, Ryner shrugged his shoulders,

"Well, there are explanations along those lines but, I myself simply could not really understand from that perspective. However, this I do know, you can subordinate these glittering fluffy stuff in accordance to certain rules. It may be a little hard to explain here. In simple terms, depending on the order of arrangement of the glittering fluffy stuff, you can create various phenomena..... such as flames or lightning....."

After having said that, he demonstrated by moving his finger in the air.

On doing that, for people who can't use magic, they would have been able to see glowing words appearing in the air from Ryner's inscribing motion.

However.....

It is different in reality.

For a person who can use magic, this would be what he would have seen.

The energy flow embedded in the air, or rather in the entire world..... the flow of the golden particles got disrupted by the finger, and got arranged in a

certain precise fashion.....

But.....

If an **Alpha Stigma** bearer saw it.....

Arua naturally started to move his finger.....

With a dazed look, while watching Ryner, his finger started mimicking him and started disrupting the world.....

Furthermore.

Even when Ryner stopped his finger, he carried on. It was as if he had seen the entire puzzle beforehand, as he inscribed the glowing words.....

"I OFFER THE CONTRACTED WORDS, RELEASING THE SPIRIT OF LIGHT DANCING IN THE SKY"

In the midst of chanting that, the light above Arua's head took up a form of dog-like beasts.....

But, Ryner with a even faster speed, let his finger dance in the air.....

"I OFFER THE CONTRACTED WORDS, er...anyways, DARKNESS OVERWHELMS LIGHT"

He chanted something that sounded like an incantation and yet not quite like an incantation.....

Fluid-like dark blobs appeared above Ryner's head, and he launched it towards the beasts above Arua's head.

And then.....

The beasts were swallowed up by the darkness, and were erased completely.....

Arua, looking surprised, said.

"Ah..... just, just now, awesome..... Sensei, the magic just now was created

by you?"

Ryner smiled,

"It's really fun teaching you. That's correct. I just created that magic impromptu. I think you should have more or less understood..... this is the method by which magic is used. By properly arranging what you referred to as glittering fluffy stuff, its power can be unleashed. And on top of that, at the very end of the incantation, you must create in your a mind a stronger image. The strength of the image in your mind is equivalent to the strength of your magic..... your power will depend on how well and how much strength you put into your imagination."

Even though it sounded complicated, Arua still nodded in understanding,

"I see. That's why my magic was weak, because the image I held in my mind was weak....."

"Yes. Furthermore, the way you arrange those glittering fluffy stuff still needs more work. Well, in any case, the strength of your magic will greatly depend on the strength of your image, and the arrangement of the flow..... that's why the military magic academy scholars of various countries put their lives on the line during their research. There is no real limit to how you can arrange those glittering fluffy stuff..... since even by changing just the beginning of the arrangement, the meaning of the entire appearance, symbol, incantation changes..... that's why magic differs from country to country..... well though the same could be said otherwise, if one is aware of the governing rules, one can improvise and create magic impromptu like the way I did earlier."

And Arua said,

"But, that magic was created after the researchers had spent lots of time on it....."

"Yeah. It's incomparable. Though it seems like they can't create self-styled magic the way they create that magic that could be used in real battles. By the

way, the magic that you just copied from me belongs to Estabul..... did you manage to get it and understand it?"

"Yes. It was beautiful and the glittering stuff was efficiently arranged."

"Yeah. It was pretty much near completion, I think. Inscribing it with perfect efficiency, a small number of strokes for a great amount of power..... furthermore, stronger thoughts, in the same way how you strengthen your image, could be engraved into the words that make up the corresponding incantation. Well, it could be at the same level as Roland's magic..... perhaps it might even surpass that..... since a spell like **Izuchi** still has a seam in its arrangement, and I do sometimes tamper with it during usage....."

"Eh? Izuchi.....? What is that?"

"Never mind, I was talking to myself. Well, if you've already understood this much, we are done with three years' worth of training. What's left..... would be battle training..... and spell acquisition. Well for that, whenever I use one, you would be able to remember it easily after watching me..... it seems like you could be more useful than I thought....."

It was in the instant when Ryner said that.

“Danger!!”

A voice rung out from somewhere, Arua's body suddenly disappeared from Ryner's view.

No, it wasn't disappeared.

He was forcefully taken away by someone at a blinding speed...

At some point in time, Arua's cry sounded from behind Ryner.

“Eh, eh?! What is it?... Sen, sensei?! Save, save me!”

But, Ryner had no reaction to this. He only looked on with half-lidded eyes...

“.....Uh, I really can't see what was dangerous with that... Anyway,

welcome back, Ferris.”

He turned back and said. He saw a beautiful woman standing there with Arua under her arm...

That beauty said:

“Arua, don’t be tricked by him. I don’t know how many perverted thoughts that man has taught you... but don’t trust him. Because he is the actual model of an evil person. Not working from day to night, only knowing of how to sleep, addicted to wine, not letting women live happily, and going to the streets to search for prey every night...”

Then for some reason, she suddenly blushed and said:

“...Uh, the following things aren’t appropriate for a child to hear...”

They had a strange conversation between them like usual, seeing Arua’ stunned expression, he looked at Ryner and said:

“Is, is that true? Sensei?!”

“Don’t believe her! Ah, that’s what I was talking about. This person, as I mentioned earlier, is my companion Ferris...”

Ryner said. And Arua raised his head to look at Ferris, then he had a surprised expression.

“Eh... this person? But, but, she’s so pretty...”

“Don’t be tricked by her. She’s only good looking on the outside, but her personality is so evil that she can destroy the whole world...”

Ferris unsheathed her sword, and placed it on Ryner’s shoulder...

Then looked at Ryner straight in the eye.

“Eh? What did you say?”

Seeing that, Ryner opened his mouth and closed it a few times, then he said:

“...Ah, that, uh... what should I say? The beautiful angel that will save the world.....? Eh.”

For some reason, Arua laughed. He looked at the duo gleefully, then said:

“Ahaha, your relationship is so good, you’re actually a couple, right?”

Ryner heard that, and instantly replied:

“Ah, what point about us made you think that?”

Following that Ferris skillfully sheathed her sword at her waist, as she nodded:

“Mm-hmm. It’s clear that between us, you have to worship the unbelievably beautiful avalanche-like beauty, me, but because you determined yourself as ugly, for this kind of illegal romance, you are like a slug slumped on the ground—this relationship?”

“Hey hey, you can actually think of these new descriptions... Slug? Avalanche beauty? ...Ah, but, that kind of romance doesn’t have a good ending, right? A slug seems to be unable to be able to survive in places with avalanches. Poor slug. It has been played with the naturally destructive evil woman...”

“You said you want to die? Alright, I’ll grant your wish.”

“Ah! I was joking I was joking! It’s alright if it cannot be fulfilled... I say, you just kept your sword, why are you taking it out again!”

“Because fulfilling the dreams of fools, is the mission of the beautiful angel. I am very passionate about my work? Praise me?”

Ferris said, as she pulled out her sword. Ryner sighed, then looked at Arua.

“...She still wants praise from others, what do you think?”

Arua laughed again.

“Your relationship is really good.”

“Let me ask you, what point is it that makes you feel that way?”

“Eh? But, because it feels like me and Kuku.”

“...Oh? Is, is that it?”

At this moment, Ryner quietened, then said:

“Then, am I wrong about something? That... perhaps it’s too late to suggest this, but, I think it’s best not to go and save Kuku... Ah?!”

At this moment, Ryner was slapped hard. He was hit by the sword that was swung at an unbelievable speed, his whole body struck the ground.

Ferris told Arua who was standing across from her:

“I see. You plan to save Kuku too.”

“Ah, yes, yes.”

“What is this, Arua! You’re not concerned about your sensei? I was hit just now!”

For a moment Arua looked at Ryner with a troubled expression, then he turned back to Ferris.

“That, that, that’s the case, please look after me from today onwards...Ferris sensei...”

Ferris nodded when she saw this:

“Uh, alright. I will make you stronger.”

When Ryner heard this.....

“.....That brat is very strange...”

He couldn’t help but groan.

Putting that aside for now.

Ferris turned to tell Ryner:

“Then, from your earlier conversation, you plan to let Arua support us, and we deal with that pink headed team?”

Ryner pressed a hand to his head, as he stood he said:

“...Yeah, I think this method is a little foolhardy... But, there aren’t any other ways? If we can find other Heroes’ Relics like what they are using, then that would be a different story...”

“Don’t you have knowledge of that? Any stories or legends of heroes in Runa...”

But Ryner shook his head.

“There’s no time. It’s not that I have no leads, but... the probability of them being fake are higher? If it could be found so easily, then we wouldn’t be going through so much trouble in the first place. Anyway I said it before, the legends of heroes in Runa are mostly related to the royal family, so I only have news regarding the capital of Runa... If we head to the capital now... to look for relics, but return empty-handed... and in addition if we are attacked by Sui and Kuu during that time period, honestly speaking, I have no confidence that I can protect Arua...”

Until here, he seemed to think of something.

“Ah, how about this? We ask Sion to send reinforcements...”

“To Runa? Impossible. If the Roland King sends armed forces into their ally Runa, this would lower every country’s opinion of Roland. Perhaps, other countries would send soldiers to aid Runa, and Roland would be wiped out. Anyway, who would request Roland to send reinforcements? And in the time we wait for the reinforcements, what if we are attacked by Sui and Kuu? To be explicit, we cannot leave Arua alone. Because not only Sui and Kuu, even the Runa soldiers are looking for Arua.”

Ryner had a troubled expression when he heard this, he crossed his arms, deep in thought.

“That’s right... If we spend too much time, Kuku would probably be killed to... It seems we have to strengthen Arua’s strength?”

Arua replied to this:

“I’m sorry, it’s all because of me...”

“No, you don’t have to apologise. But, because there’s really no time, the training will be a little stricter... At that time you may turn around and apologise to use because of the harsh training, and request for us to stop it, so if you want to apologise, wait for that moment... That’s that, Ferris, a week... We have to train Arua till the standard where he can move in battle in a week...”

“Mm-hmm. A week? I understand.”

“Then, that’s it, I’m really going to die because of the strange reason of lack of sleep. I’m going to sleep for a while. So, Ferris, teach him the physical arts first... You are better suited for teaching physical skills than me, right?”

“Eh? You’re saying, because you want to sleep, so you’re handing the work load to me...”

“No no. I’m serious. I feel, as a knight, you have already reached the perfect state for physical skills...”

But hearing Ryner say that, Ferris still had a surprised expression.

“...Uh, I don’t know what plans you have in praising me, but... forget it, I wouldn’t argue with you. Alright, Arua, let’s go.”

Ferris said, then brought Arua away...

“Ah, I’m telling the truth, but, even though I’m saying that you’ve already reached the perfect state of physical skills, your personality is a different matter...”

Ryner said softly, so that Ferris couldn’t hear.

But, the part about perfect state physical of physical skills was true.

Because Ferris's movements, were even faster than Ryner who used magic to release his mind's limitations and force his body to speed up.

Honestly speaking, her movements had already reached an unhuman state.

Actually Ryner wasn't slow either. No, as long as he wanted to, even if he didn't use magic, he was able to cover up his presence and kill the other party before they noticed.

Because that was how he had been taught, and among those who had been taught, he was praised as a genius.

But, even if it were someone like him, he couldn't keep up with Ferris's movements. Her reaction speed, her swordsmanship, and sensitivity to fighting... She was way superior to Ryner on various areas of strength.

Frankly speaking, he didn't even know, if he used magic whole-heartedly, that he would be able to win Ferris.

Ah, perhaps it was because of that, so they were the best match.

And, Ryner who was called the strongest magician in Roland Empire, and Ferris who the best swordsperson... If they joined forces, and used their strength, in battle conditions, perhaps they could win Sui and Kuu who depended on the overwhelming power of the Heroes' Relics.

And if they could add in another force, then the process of fighting would be expanded.

Ryner lay on the grass, watching Arua who had been led away by Ferris.

“Ah, the kid may become an unbelievably difficult opponent after today...”

He murmured.

Because, he was going to learn fighting from Ferris, then he was going to learn magic from Ryner who had the same **Alpha Stigma**.

It was impossible in a short period, but...

Ryner closed his eyes.

“But, in a week, he will be at the stage where he can help out...”

At this moment—

“Aaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhh~ It, it can’t be?! You’re lying? Uh, let, let, let me go... I beg you, let me go... Aaaah!”

Arua screamed.

But, Ryner didn’t open his eyes when he heard this.

“Ah, see, he’s apologizing... It was like that from the beginning... Good luck, Arua.”

After he entered a deep sleep, Arua’s screams resounded on the plain five more times.

Runa Empire was a country that was built on their belief in god.

So this was reflected in the lives of people, even in the law...

For example, in Runa, women could not be in the military. That was because the religious text in the religion that the Runa people believed in wrote:

“God first created men, to be the power to protect the country. Then created women, to heal and support men.”

Perhaps it was because of that, this country forbid women from entering the military. Other than that, there were many other laws that took the religious teachings as their basis.

“...How inefficient.”

Froade looked around, and muttered.

He was in the center of Runa Empire... it could be called the heart too.

It was a large castle in the center of the Empire.

The strange guardian of Runa that was a cross with stars could be seen everywhere.

Everyone had a sincere and respectful expression.

In truth...

“...Those religious teachings that that god left, are convenient things that the royal family created for their own convenience...”

Froaude complained softly, as he looked ahead.

He was in the room where audiences with the king was requested.

In there, was an unbelievably pale-skinned beautiful woman.

She was the famous beautiful princess of Runa. Princess Anna Esther.

Her skin was really a pale white, it was a kind of sickly white, it made people suspect, had she ever went out before? The pale skin matched with the graceful, elegant appearance. A fire-red amulet hung around her slim neck...

Froaude saw this, and narrowed his eyes.

(...The people are living thrifty lives, but the royal family are living comfortable lives, every noble in any country are the same...)

At this moment, Anna said:

“Are you the ambassador from Roland?”

Froaude slowly placed a hand on his chest and bowed his head when he heard this.

“Yes. I am Lieutenant Colonel Miran Froaude from the Roland army. Your Highness. The purpose of my visit is to strengthen the deep relationship between Runa Empire and Roland Empire. As you know, the Roland Empire

has elected a new king..."

Anna nodded warmly when she heard that.

"Yes. I've heard of it. It's Sion Astal-sama, am I not wrong? My father mentioned it before, although he is getting on in his years, although he is young, but he still manages the government well, he has gained the large support from the people, he is a remarkable king."

Froaude bowed his head to express his thanks when he heard that.

"To us Roland, what the king of the Runa Empire, has strengthened us. The alliance between Runa and Roland started from the previous king... But, now that Roland has a new king, my liege lord is worried, that there will be cracks in the relationship between our countries."

No, there were already cracks... the fact that Runa had some unstable movements was well known.

Froaude continued:

"There have been unnecessary rumours in the streets... For instance, the rumours pointed out that the nobles of Roland and Runa have been plotting privately to assassinate the Roland king..." That was actually a threat.

That meant, your plot has already been exposed, so if you want to give up, then do it now.

But, Anna revealed a surprised expression.

"Ah, there were those sort of rumours?"

Froaude replied: ".....Yes. But, your king would obviously not put stock in those rumours. But, as they say, do not be scared of one thousand, but be wary of the possibilities. If there is a war between the allied Runa and Roland..."

Anna nodded when she heard this:

“Of course. In the teachings of our God, we have to avoid conflict too. We definitely wouldn’t allow anything to destroy our good relationship with Roland that we built with much effort.”

She said.

Froaude stared at Anna’s face when he heard this. But, her expression was unchanging. It seemed she was earnest about this.

From the bottom of her heart...

But, among several of the nobles behind her, had turned deathly pale...

Froaude smiled when he saw this. He had his dark, as if frozen smile.

“...I will pass Your Highness’s words...to the Roland king. But, if possible, I wish that you can pass this on to the Runa king...”

But, Princess Anna had an apologetic expression.

“This issue... Although the Roland ambassador has transverse a great distance... Unfortunately, the king and queen are currently not in the country...”

“Oh, they are not in the country... Then may I ask where they have gone to? I have not heard of the Runa king venturing to Roland... That means, they have headed to Cassla in the north? Or is it Imperial Nelpha?”

But, Princess Anna frowned as if troubled.

“I apologise. I am not clear about this. I think they left the country because of some public matters... I’m really sorry, I am not sure about this...”

But, Froaude shook his head when he heard this.

“...Do not apologise, I overstepped my boundaries. Women are not involved in politics... That is what all the women in this country are taught, right? Then having the princess greet me, I am thankful for your efforts.”

Saying that, he held his hand to his chest and bowed his head again.

But for some reason, Anna suddenly blushed.

“Ah, please don’t say that... Being able to see someone like Froaude-sama, is my pleasure, I’m really happy... Ah, Froaude-sama, do you have any plans for tonight? Do you plan to stay here? If you do plan to, then please enjoy a meal with me...”

She said.

Froaude’s eyes sharpened when he heard this.

He saw Anna’s slightly embarrassed face, and her eyes were slightly wet.....

“.....My lady’s initiative is a little astounding. The nobles in any place are indeed the same. No matter whether it is man or woman...”

He murmured softly.

Of course Anna didn’t hear what he said.

“Eh? May I ask, what did you...”

At this point, Froaude smiled. Then replied:

“Of course, I would be my pleasure to dine with you, Your Highness.”

That night.

In the hours where everyone was fast asleep...

In the cloudless sky, the moon was bright, it was a beautiful night.

The location was a garden in the Runa castle.

Froaude sat on the stone bench in the garden, looking at the moon reflected in the fountain, then raised his head and said:

“...Tonight is a beautiful night. Don’t you think this kind of beautiful night should be used to confess to your loved one?”

He said.

“.....”

But, his companion did not say anything.

No, to be truthful they couldn't say anything.

This person was surrounded by a pack of strange monsters... Shadows darker than the darkness of the night were in the form of beasts that surrounded him... Overwhelming fear made this man unable to move even a single finger.

It was a young male noble. He was called Anbellum Biefella. In Runa, his position was similar to a Marquis.

Froaude slowly looked in Biefella's direction.

“You don't have to be so scared. As long as you answer my questions, I wouldn't do anything bad to you...”

Biefella finally spoke when he heard this.

“...What, what are these monsters... You, you... You dare to treat me like this... Do you think you can retreat safely... I, I have royal blood too? Do you know what it means to be of royal lineage?”

But Froaude tilted his head slightly.

“Uh... What does that mean?”

Biefella had an arrogant expression.

“That means we are God's descendants. The descendants of the God who protects Runa Empire... God will punish you for treating me like this!!”

He shouted.

And Froaude replied:

“That's frightening. Then, if I kill you now, will God punish me?”

“That’s right! So now you better...”

But, Froaude interrupted him.

“Then, let us try it? If I kill you now, will God really punish me, I must tell my king to do away with the thought of attacking Runa. Because we cannot defeat God.”

Biefella widened his eyes when he heard this.

“You... What are you saying? Roland is ignoring the alliance, and thinking of attacking Runa?!”

But, Froaude shrugged when he heard that.

“It sounds surprising. The ones who destroyed the relationship are you? Then, let me ask you, you joined forces with the Roland nobles, to attempt to murder my king... King Sion Astal. My problem is this. How many nobles were involved in this plan?”

Biefella panicked when he heard this.

“There’s, there’s no such thing! That’s your misunderstanding...”

But, Froaude continued:

“But, after seeing Princess Anna today, I know the answer to this question. This plot was from your king... The Runa Empire’s king. The assassination of the Roland king failed... Then, the Runa king was not in the country. But on the surface you said the Runa king had left the country... Then, which country is the Runa king going to for help? Which country would combine forces to plan to destroy Roland? Which country’s people... came forward to persuade you, and say that as long as you joined forces with them, you could defeat Roland?”

“I, I said there’s no such that...”

In a moment, the dark beast opened its sharp jaw soundlessly, and leapt towards Biefella’s throat...

But, it stopped in time.

Biefella saw that—

“Uh...ah...”

He sat on the ground abruptly...

Froaude said:

“The next time it will eat you. The one I’m asking doesn’t have to be you. Because the one whose expression changed wasn’t only you...”

Biefella’s entire face contorted in fear when he heard this, he looked at Froaude...

“You, if you do this... If, if it were seen...”

“Impossible.”

Froaude immediately replied:

“I have already told my subordinates to stand guard around here. So, please be prepared, if someone comes, then it will be your death. If someone sees things, things can get tricky... So, I will let you disappear. But, I already said before, if you reply my questions obediently, then that’s something else entirely...”

At this time, he raised his head to look at the sky. He looked at the bright glowing moon in the sky...

“Anyway... tonight’s moon is really beautiful. Don’t you want to return safely to your lover’s side?”

That sentence was the fatal blow.

Biefella’s body trembled...

Then, he started to speak.

The current situation of Runa, and the king’s movements.

After hearing his reply, Froaude smiled.

“Thank you for your help.”

“That, that is the entire truth. I have said everything. Can you let me go now?
These beasts...”

Then...

He spoke until there.

Froaude raised his hand...

No, he waved the strange black ring on his finger...

In the next moment.

Only Froaude was left in the garden.

The beasts and Biefella were gone...

“Tonight’s moon is really beautiful.”

He said again softly.

Then, a week and four days passed...

It was night time.

Because the clouds covered the sky, it was a dark night as the moon was completely blocked out.

But, that place was still illuminated by wavering flames even though it was dark.

This was a place called Jizcard, which consisted of Rajit Village which Arua was born in, the villa of the noble that ruled was in this area. There was a strong contrast between the extravagance of this villa and the poor Rajit Village...

But, Ryner had once seen this building.

“...Hey, Ferris, the last time we were here...”

Ferris nodded when she heard this.

“Yes. I picked up the carriage from here last time.”

“No, I don’t think that was picking up, but stealing.”

Ryner grumbled, then spoke with a serious expression:

“Uh, anyway, Kuku is kept here. Then the story of the hero Arua going to save Princess Kuku... will that progress smoothly?”

Saying that, he glanced behind him.

He saw an injured Arua...

His body had even more scratches and bruises than when he had been interrogated by the nobles last time...

But, the youth’s eyes were filled with energy and motivation, it was completely different from how he had been a week ago.

He was glaring straight at the noble’s villa.

“I will definitely save Kuku. I wouldn’t become a stumbling block to sensei.”

He said determinedly. No, he already had the ability to make that sort of announcement.

In this week, he had experienced a training process that no normal person could imagine.

Ferris had been in charge of the physical training, in addition to Ryner’s magic lessons, and battle training on how to use magic.

In the later part of the week, he would constantly challenge normal Runa soldiers and normal Mage soldiers... At the moment he could single-handedly deal with two Mage Soldiers Uh, although he wasn’t at the level

where he could defeat two Mage soldiers at the same time.

But, at this rate, if he could surpass Ryner when he was young.

Perhaps it was because Ferris was teaching him fighting skills, perhaps it was due to Ryner who was familiar with the Alpha Stigma who was teaching him magic...

But, most importantly, Arua and the past Ryner had a decisive difference, and that was...

Motivation. Arua was really training crazily to save Kuku.

Arua's current fighting skill was enough that he could participate in this time's battle plan.

And... because of that...

Ryner stared at Arua, asking:

“Hey, before we start the rescue plan, let me check with you again. Do you really want to come along? At your current strength, in the time before we return, you can probably hide from the Runa soldiers. Even if found, you have the ability to escape from their sight. But once you are found by the Mage Knight Battalion, then obviously you might lose your life... But, if you come with us now...”

At this point, he turned his eyes to the noble's villa again.

“You will probably lose your life immediately.”

He said straightforwardly.

“Do you still want to come along in this case?”

Then, he looked at Arua again.

But, Arua's expression didn't change in the least. He stared straight at Ryner.

“Of course I want to go. I worked hard till today for this reason. My power may not be matured yet, but I know, the training I had this week... was the

plan to fight against the people called Sui and Kuu that sensei told me about, isn't that right? But I understood after fighting with the other normal soldiers. Sensei taught me when fighting with normal soldiers, there clearly isn't a need for magic and unnecessary movements... And, Ryner-sensei and Ferris-sensei cannot defeat them by themselves, right? If that is so..."

"Children do not need to worry about this. From the beginning, I did train you with this kind of mindset... But, in the end it is still too dangerous. Uh, I think that even if you were caught, it wouldn't be so bad that you would be killed immediately... But you will become a hostage that the other party will threaten us with..."

Then, at this moment Arua interrupted Ryner.

"Even if that is the case... even if sensei stops me, I will still go. Because that is the only motivating power to keep me living. The one who killed father and mother is me..."

"You didn't kill them."

Ryner immediately retorted, and Arua stopped speaking.

But, Ryner was very clear, that these words were unable to comfort him.

It was caused by me.

It was because of me.

These words would frequently circle around their mind, as long as they had these pair of 'eyes'.

Arua said with a sad smile:

"But I want to go. Because, if it weren't sensei who came to me, I would have died at that time. It was Kuku who saved me. Kuku, she..."

"But before that, didn't you save Kuku's life? When Kuku was nearly killed, you used those eyes to save her. You don't owe each other anything. You don't have to hold yourself accountable..."

But.

“I want to go. Even if sensei doesn’t bring me along, I will go myself too. I already have that sort of ability.”

He said. Ryner frowned when he heard this, then turned to Ferris.

“.....It seems we over-trained him...”

Then Ferris nodded too.

“Yes. He is trained well. He really resembles his mother. In this week, so that he wouldn’t resemble his useless father, I worked hard, it seems that you reap what you sow.”

Ryner replied with half-lidded eyes when he heard this:

“...The useless father you are referring to, it can’t be referring to me, right?”

“Eh? Is there anyone else? The world’s number one candidate in doing what he likes and not accomplishing anything since the past few centuries...”

“I’m not that old!”

The two of them squabbled lamely like this...

At this moment Ryner looked at the noble’s villa again.

He looked at the building that Sui and Kuu were waiting for them to walk into and fall into their hands.

Then he said with a lazy voice:

“Ah, I think that it has its possibilities... As long as the battle plan goes smoothly, we still have a chance of winning. If the situation is really urgent, Ferris and I will stop them, and Arua will escape quickly...”

To be clearer, Sui and Kuu were extremely interested in Ryner’s **Alpha Stigma**. If he allowed himself to be caught obediently, perhaps Arua and Kuku could be released.

Although they couldn't release Ferris who belonged to Roland as well...

Ryner thought of it, then nodded in content, and said:

"We will pick one of these days deliberately and move on the night when the moonlight is the dimmest. Let us prepare to attack before the sun arises."

Ferris and Arua nodded.

So, the three of them started moving.

Heading in the direction of the noble's villa...

In the villa... there wasn't a single soldier.

Before they reached here, there were some soldiers guarding the carriage room.

Ryner's face darkened when he saw this.

".....Things seem bad, Ferris. There is no other presences in the villa, that means, there's only the high-skilled people like Sui and Kuu..."

Although he said that, but he didn't deliberately lower his volume.

Not only that, they even made a great noise as they destroyed the villa's main door, walking in shamelessly...

Ferris replied with her usual mild voice:

"Uhn, perhaps the other side has noticed us. But, isn't that one of the battle plans you came up with?"

Ryner scowled when he heard this:

"Uhn, that's indeed true... But, I also wish, if possible, that we slip in when Sui and Kuu are not present... After dealing with the guards and those stupid nobles in two, three blows, then we can rescue Kuku, isn't that good as well? But... There's not even a single guard. And on our way here, there wasn't

even a single trap that seemed like a trap. That means... they don't want to wait anymore. And that means, fighting with opponents like us, don't require any preparation at all... We have really been looked down on."

At this moment.

"Correct answer! Isn't that obvious! No matter how powerful you are, you can't defeat my Ailecrono's Scythe."

Kuu said with an energetic voice as she appeared. Her speaking fashion was completely different from when they last met, she peeked out from behind the railing of an extremely wide staircase near the entrance.

When she wasn't using that scythe... According to her, when she was not using the Ailecrono's Scythe, she would talk until people suspected she would never close her mouth.

That mouth that was eternally not close opened again.

"Really, Sui Nii-san, hurry up! Do you plan to make me face two people again? Forget it, I think I alone can easily gain victory... Hey, those two people from Roland are here."

As she finished speaking, Sui who was still smiling steadily from since the last time they met, appeared in the corridor behind...

"The two honored guests, have made us wait for a long time..."

But, at this moment Kuu said:

"Is this the time to be talking about how long we waited! It's been a week? A week?! Aren't you too emotionless? You clearly knew a girl was imprisoned, but you left her to wait for a week, what do you mean, Sui Nii-san, don't remain quiet all the time, say something!"

She clearly interrupted Sui and still scolded him without changing her expression.

Sui heard this.

“Eh? Ah, ehn, I’m sorry. That, I wanted to say… we have waited for you for a long time…”

This time it was Ryner who interrupted him.

“Ah, you’ve said this before, that’s enough. In the end… what do you plan to do? In the end it’s still an unavoidable fight?”

Sui shrugged upon hearing that.

“No……There shouldn’t be a need for that? Ryner-san and the others are here to save that girl called Kuku, right? Ah, just to tell you, Kuku-chan is in the last room in the corridor behind us… The problem lies here. Just speaking about location, the nearest place to the room where Kuku-chan is sleeping is…”

Ryner interrupted him.

“Stop going in circles. Anyway, what you want to say is that Kuku’s life lies in your hands, if we don’t want her to be killed, then surrender obediently, right?”

Sui smiled when he heard this.

“That’s right. I didn’t want to use this kind of method at first…”

Kuu nodded forcefully.

“We don’t like to use such underhanded methods too. Because underhanded things are always done by people who have no abilities, right? But our abilities are too strong, in actuality there’s no need to do this. But, but, Sui Nii-san says, this time we have to do this no matter what, so…”

“Because you want to investigate my **Alpha Stigma** properly… am I right?”

Ryner asked, Sui stared at Ryner when he heard that… No, he stared at Ryner’s eyes.

He stared at Ryner’s **Alpha Stigma**.

“As expected of Ryner-san, you are right. Your special eyes... Losing that power is too bad... From what I see, the structure of your eyes aren’t any different from other **Alpha Stigmas**... But the power released when you lose control differs greatly. And, even if you lose control... you are able to regain your original personality. That is... because your consciousness is strong? Or because your **Alpha Stigma** is special...? What are you? I am too interested in you. Our king will definitely want to meet you too. So, this is our suggestion, if you want, surrender obediently... then, use your power for our country? The two of you have such high skills and power, I trust that you will be treated as high-classed...”

But, Ferris replied when she heard this:

“Stop joking. People who don’t even announce their country’s name or king’s name...”

At this moment—

“Gastark, Ferris-san. The country that we belong to... is the Gastark Empire that is in a place further north of here. Our king’s name is called Riphal Edea. We don’t have any need to hide it anymore? The news of our actions in various countries, seemed to have started to be noticed by Roland...”

But, Ferris interrupted him again.

“No. The reason why you revealed your history, is because you plan to kill us here. If we are not willing to surrender... then you will kill us. Right?”

“.....No, uh, of course there is that reason. But, honestly speaking, I think the best thing for you now is to choose us. I don’t want to say that this will be actualized immediately, but the whole world will eventually become Gastark’s. A peaceful world ruled by our talented king. A world where there is no discrimination, where no one will get hurt, where no one will cry in pain, where everyone can laugh happily and live their days. Our master who is the king of Gastark, has a huge weapon that can create this world. So, we

are willing to take orders from him. So, you should...”

But, at this point Ferris said:

“Nonsense...”

But, Ryner interrupted her.

“No, wait, Ferris. Let’s listen, I feel that his words are kind of attractive...”

He said. Ferris turned to Ryner when she heard that.

“You...What are you saying...”

But, Ryner ignored Ferris, and said as he stared at Sui:

“A peaceful world... where no one faces discrimination and can laugh happily as they live their days out... It sounds really good. Does your king really aim to build this kind of a country?”

“Of course. I should say His Majesty is a person who is same on the inside and outside... no, although it may sound bad, I should say that he’s a really simple person... He really wants to fulfil this dream.”

Ryner looked at Sui who said this, then nodded and replied:

“Ah, the more I listen the more I think he really seems to be a good king that can be relied on. How attractive. I can tell from your expression that you aren’t lying. Indeed... Perhaps your king has the ability to build that kind of world. To be worshipped by his subordinates, he should be a good king, right? Becoming your comrades, would probably be more relaxing...”

Then Sui smiled and spoke:

“Then, towards our country, you...”

But Ryner cut off Sui’s words.

He glared at Sui and stated:

“...But, in that case, why do you kill people as you like? Why do you always

do those dirty things? You... killed so many people. In order to possess the Heroes' Relics... No, you called the relics Rhule Fragmei? Didn't you kill those people who knew the truth... who knew about the existence of the relics? I remembered you said once, you wanted to gouge out the eyes of us Alpha Stigma bearers? Once people's eyes are gouged out, wouldn't they die? Once normal Alpha Stigma bearers lose control, they cannot regain their original selves... didn't you say that? Unable to regain their original selves. Unable to resume their original selves... so, after you gouged out the eyes you killed them. Kill! Kill!! Kill?!

“You are really noisy. You dare to say these after you have done those things, saying that you want to build a country where everyone can laugh and live their days? What kind of thinking makes you say that? If your actions are really the orders of the king of that country, Gastark, then your king is trash. That country isn't somewhere where we can live in. At least... in a country where you don't treat us Alpha Stigma bearers as humans, there is no place for us.”

He said unhappily.

Kuu heard that:

“You, you dare to...talk about our...”

But, Sui only raised his hand to stop her, then... he spoke with his usual mild and steady tone:

“...That makes sense. Ryner-san is right, but... Like Kuu, I do feel angry when someone talks bad about His Majesty. You don't understand His Majesty at all. What you said earlier were pretty words. You asked us why do we kill people? Because that is necessary, so we kill. We save the country with the smallest number of sacrifices. Is that wrong? I don't like to do that too. When killing, we have to take up an equal amount of pain...”

“You don't even take up any burden of pain! You think that killing people can

fulfil dreams and ideals? To save the majority, sacrificing the minority is something that can't be helped? If that is so..."

At this point, Ryner frowned, and clammed up.

If that is so... what about Arua?

He wanted to ask this...

What about Arua who was an **Alpha Stigma** bearer?

If he were alive, then no one would know when he would lose control...

An **Alpha Stigma** bearer who could massacre many people at an unknown time, didn't he deserve to be killed?

If they killed one bearer, and save many people, then shouldn't all bearers be killed immediately?

That was the thinking of the Stohl and Gastark kings.

Ryner knew too, the attractiveness of such thinking. When killing people, we have to take up an equal amount of pain... Sui had said that.

Perhaps that was the truth? Ryner understood. When killing people... When other people died because of yourself... Every time, his mind almost lost control.

No matter how high the flag of dreams was flown, no matter how they tried to cover up their actions with dreams, that kind of pain could never be healed.

Despite this, that king still proceeded unwaveringly.

Although he was hurt himself... but to save the world, to save even more people...

It sounded really attractive.

But...

Ryner stared at Sui and continued:

“...I feel that that is a good way. I always thought that this was a good idea. Because I... I have already killed many people. Because of these eyes, I have already killed many...people who viewed me as a comrade. So, if it’s like what you said, if you have no meaning in living on... I cannot deny that. No, along the way, I had always thought that way. I thought, a monster like me, has no value in continuing to live. But... Arua is different. He hasn’t killed anyone. And from today onwards he will not kill anyone. But, you tried to kill him. He is different from me... He is not like me who is unable to turn back, he still has a future...”

“But, no country is willing to accept **Alpha Stigma** bearers...”

“However, Roland is different. Si...No, although our king is someone who strangely likes to tease me... But, that person is different from your king. He is a total idiot who really takes, like what you said, a country where everyone can laugh happily and live their days... as his goal, and works very hard for it. Because that person is a greedy person who wants to save the majority, as well as the minority. He also mistakenly thought that he had that ability. He is an over-conscious person who will blame everything on himself as long as a person dies.....But.....”

At this moment, Ryner smiled.

“.....But, because of that, we are willing to lend him our strength. Because I think, being able to live in a world that is created by him, seems to be a good thing...”

And Sui replied:

“..... I see. King Sion Astal, is it... According to information, he seems to be a talented person.....But, as a talented king.....then that includes what I just said, the courage to sacrifice the minority for the majority. Ryner-san, your king may be someone who avoids sacrifices, but, if such a choice causes even more sacrifices, then what will you do? Doesn’t what you just said contradict yourself?”

But, Ryner nodded simply.

“Yeah, there may be some contradictions. Even so, I still feel that the country built by that person is better. People are not God. There are limits to our abilities. But, that person still tries to minimize the sacrifices. To the country built by such a king, I...”

“But..... no matter what, the more talented this king is... the more choices he can make is limited. One day, there will be a possibility that he will differ from your ideals... Then what will you do then?”

“At that time, I will beat up the king, and let him resume his original appearance...”

Sui grew quiet after he heard this. The initially steady expression started to wrinkle slightly.

“.....Heh. Do you think that those pretty superficial words can win us Gastark?”

At this moment, Ryner stared at Sui...

“I came here with the confidence that I will win.”

“Then what about Kuku-chan?”

“If you want to kill her, then kill her. Anyway if we can’t defeat you today, you planned to kill her anyway, isn’t that so? Killing everyone who knows the truth. That has always been your style.”

“In that case, that means the negotiations have fallen through?”

“I didn’t plan to negotiate with you in the beginning.”

Saying that, Ryner turned to Ferris, murmuring:

“Ne, can we fight now? I have already gained over much time. Let’s go.”

So Ferris said:

“Yes. The content of your speech was quite interesting. I don’t disagree with

your thinking too.”

She suddenly said this, Ryner had a surprised expression when he heard that.

“Ah? What are you suddenly...”

But, Ferris’s expression was unchanging, she stared straight at Ryner.

“Mm-hmm. Because we might lose here if we are not careful.”

She said.

Because we might die here...

Ferris’s words sounded like they had a serious, realistic undercurrent. Sui and Kuu who were relying on the power of the relics, had abilities that shocking.

If they clashed head on, then out of the ten times they fought, they could be killed ten times?

The opponents’ difference in power was so large that it made one despair.

And they were indoors now. This time there probably was no way to escape? Sui and Kuu had let Ryner and the other escape the previous time. But, this time they wouldn’t make the same mistake as they did last time.

There was no where they could escape to.

If they didn’t defeat the opponent, then they would die.

Ferris unsheathed her sword and continued:

“So, I’ll say it first... Being your companion and travelling with you for these few months, hasn’t been that bad. In the beginning when I read your report that was full of funny jokes, I thought in my heart that, what kind of perverted daredevil is this...”

Ryner smiled wryly.

“Please don’t use perverted daredevil as a description!”

After saying that, he readied his battle posture.

Then he raised his eyes to look at Sui and Kuu...

“.....Will we die?”

“Perhaps.”

“But, we can only gamble now.”

“Yes.”

Then Ryner fell silent.....

“..... Uh, I don’t feel bad either. In the beginning, I thought, why is there such a violent horrible woman... Hey hey, you still want to hit me at this time...”

Ryner said with half-lidded eyes to Ferris who had pointed her sword at him for some reason. Then... he continued:

“But, it’s not a bad feeling. Because you are here, I was saved in various areas. Really, why am I always saved by people? Milk, Biore, Germer, Peria, Pia, Kiefer, Sion, Tyle, Toni, Fahl and many others... including you... and Arua. I can’t let that kid be...killed.”

Ferris nodded when she heard that.

“Mm-hmm. The youth who was born from the woman that was played and eventually thrown to one side by you, came to kill his evil father. At the end of your life, at least you tried hard to let your child see your fatherly side... but, your intentions were not accepted by the youth, and in the end you were stabbed to death—what a touching story...”

Ryner said angrily when he heard that:

“In that way, didn’t I die in the end... But I have never liked bad endings...”

“Or else—”

At this point, Ryner nodded again.

“Yeah. So that the story doesn’t have that kind of ending, I will let Arua see

how I am as a person... Then, Ferris."

As he said that, he bent down lower. A red five-pointed star appeared in his eyes... which carried the usual unmotivated tired look, but was a completely different sharp colour.

He switched on the button in his brain.

So that he could take action any moment and take the opponent's life.

At the same time, killing intent was released from his body...

It was as if it was a completely different person.

No, perhaps it should be said he turned back to the time in the past when he was called the genius Ryner Lute?

The most powerful magician in Roland Empire.

This title couldn't only be gained by depending on magic. They had to be trained in all sorts of physical skills, fighting, assassination... and other various sides, and they had to have the genius ability of using high levelled magic freely...

Everyone was scared of him.

Everyone was fearful of him.

No matter what kind of mission it was, he could complete it by himself.

He was called a genius...

So, he didn't need any companion.

In contrast, he felt that companions were a burden. He reckoned, as long as there was someone by his side, they would only get in his way.

So, he didn't need any companions.

Because his ability was too strong. He never thought that he would need

companions.

Don't approach me. Everyone doesn't want to approach me. He had thought. Because they are troublesome, because they are troublesome, because they are troublesome...

...Because I am a monster.

I clearly like the other party, but I always cause them to be harmed...

So...

He hated companions... he hated people who he treasured approach him. And he...

He said with sharp eyes, without looking back:

“...Hey.”

He said softly:

“.....I trust you, comrade.”

But Ferris simply replied:

“Yes, of course. We will win.”

We will win.

Ryner smiled when he heard this.

“Yeah...Of course!”

He took action like a bullet.

Sui said when he saw this:

“Kuu, prepare the scythe. Regrettably... we will have to kill them.”

“...”

And Kuu had taken out that scythe from somewhere, settling into her position without saying anything...

She leapt forward.

Then headed in the direction of Ferris...

Sui took out the Heroes' Relic that Ryner and the others had found before... it was a relic that was like a dagger, and stabbed it in his left arm... above where the prosthetic limb was attached...

In an instant—

Guuuuuuuuuuuaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhh.....

A roar that almost broke their ear drums sounded. After that, Sui's arm wasn't a normal arm anymore. It had a jaw, sharp teeth, scales, blood-red eyes...

It was a dragon. Sui's arm had turned into a dragon.

The power was from the relic that looked like a dagger.

That dragon was completely different from Kuu's scythe that could freeze everything, it seemed to be able to control flames freely, allowing the opponent to be burnt to death.

“Then... please disappear.”

Sui said, extending his arm towards Ryner and the others...

But, at this moment Ryner moved both hands. Glowing words were written in the air...

“I OFFER THE CONTRACTED WORDS, LETTING THE SLUMBERING MALICIOUS BEAST TO DWELL WITHIN.”

In the instant he finished chanting, his speed increased.

He jumped up with a vigorous motion, dodging the flames that the dragon spewed out, then escaped to the wall, scowling.

“Damn it... the power of the relic is really amazing... those flames... Eh, are those really flames? I can’t use the **Alpha Stigma** to tell their structure...”

Not seeing the structure, meant that he couldn’t use magic to neutralize those flames...

“Ah, damn it, the situation is not optimistic...”

Sui said:

“You can’t win us. It’s not too late. How about it? Choose us...”

Then, at this moment Ryner moved his hands again, this time he rapidly drew a magic structure in the air.

“A situation that is not optimistic doesn’t mean that we will definitely lose. We will win...”

Saying that, he started to chant.

“WHAT I SEEK IS THUNDER>>>...”

“Do you think that you can use normal magic to fight against Rhule Fragmei?”

But, Ryner did not reply.

“IZUCHI!”

The magic was released.

Sui prepared to dodge the lightning...

But.

“Eh?”

In the next instant, Sui’s expression contorted because of shock.

Because the lightning born from the magic structure Ryner drew was not released in the direction of Sui.

But, the other bolt of lightning broke the wall beside Sui, shooting out...

“Uh... this is...”

Sui moaned, flipping his body around, his body fell, and he used the dragon’s jaw on his left arm to break that bolt of lightning.

The lightning disappeared, but...

And not far from Ryner, the match between Ferris and Kuu had an abnormal happening too...

Ferris used her sword to slice down on the lightning that Ryner released, then directly used her sword to swing at Kuu.

In that instant, Kuu was able to use her scythe to avoid that lightning strike, but...

At the same time, Ferris used the sword to stab forward...

“.....W-wall.”

Kuu shouted, an ice wall suddenly grew out from the ground.

But, Ferris’s sword did not stab the ice wall, she jumped up fluidly. Using the ice wall as a stepping stone, she jumped towards the second story, at the same time she extended the sword towards Sui...

When Sui saw that.

“Uh... this... Burn...”

But—

“I wouldn’t let you do it.”

At this moment Ryner had ran up the stairs to the second storey, and was drawing a magic sequence.

At the same time, Sui’s right hand started to move too. His finger danced up, down, left and right, drawing a glowing box.

Perhaps this was the structure of Gastark’s magic?

“FROM WEST, NOTHINGNESS, FORMATION AND SUN...”

“WHAT I SEEK IS THUNDER>>>...”

The two started to chant at the same time.

But, Ryner’s speed in finishing the magic structure was faster.

“IZUCHI!”

The lightning was released.

At the same time Ferris attacked...

Sui used the dragon’s flames to deal with Ferris. In order to avoid the flames Ferris—

“Eh.”

She stopped her attack, and twisted her body to avoid the flames, landing safely.

But the lightning Ryner released continued to attack Sui.

Just before it made a direct impact—

“CREATING BRILLIANCE!”

The spear of light Sui created from the squares struck the lightning...

But, Ryner’s magic won over.

The left over magic that was unable to neutralize, directly struck Sui’s body...

“Uh! Damn...”

He was struck back by this.

But, things had not ended yet.

Another beam of lightning broke another wall and attacked Sui...

“How can this... This is bad...”

Sui tried to use the dragon's jaw to receive the blow desperately...

But, it was too late. In a moment, Sui revealed an expression of resignation...

“I've lost...”

But, at this moment Kuu blocked Sui from the front, and destroyed the lightning with her scythe.

“.....There is another enemy.”

She said.

Ryner frowned when he heard that.

“Ah, damn it! This is not good. If the earlier fight hadn't differentiated who was more powerful...”

Ferris came to Ryner's side when she heard that:

“Mm-hmm. This is slightly bad. The ambush failed. Call him back.”

So, Ryner shouted.

“Arua! The left hole!”

And there was an answering voice from outside the villa.

“Alright!”

Arua poked his head out from behind Ryner and the others... the hole created by the first Izuchi after they entered the villa...

“What, what is it? The fight just now didn't decrease them by one?”

But, Ryner frowned as he shook his head.

“The situation is not good. And your presence has been completely revealed. The current situation is a little...”

But Ferris said:

“It is extremely bad. This battle plan was supposed to make use of the

opponent's belief that they had the overwhelming advantage, and let them proceed with an underestimating attitude. If the plan earlier wasn't able to defeat a single enemy..."

At this moment, Sui stood up with the help of Kuu, and said with smiling expression:

".....This really is amazing. Killing you is indeed a pity. Because I believe His Majesty would surely want someone talented like you. Really, using Rhule Fragmei but having a hard battle, this is the first time. In addition..."

He said with an admiring tone:

"The battle strategy you used was not a commonly seen ambush tactic. Our country only sent me and Kuu to infiltrate the other countries. In the beginning, we fought with the mentality that there could be ambush soldiers other than you. But, I thought as long as the ambushers weren't in our visible range it wouldn't be a problem. Because normally, magic can only be used in areas where you can aim at the enemy properly, isn't that so? I didn't think that the lightning from outside could almost accurately hit me... What kind of grouping is this?"

At this point, he stared at Ryner.

"Ryner-san, you changed the magic structure according to what you wished, didn't you? You changed the direction of the lightning the youth released... so that your magic structure could control the lightning..."

Ryner shrugged when he heard this:

"Oh dear, you could garner this much only after that short exchange? How remarkable. I really don't want to fight you anymore..."

But, Sui still stared straight at Ryner. ".....That is what I want to say. The magic earlier was created to defeat us, right? In only a week, although it is changing existing magic, but being able to create new magic that can be used in layers, this kind of magical knowledge... No, even if it only like that, I

would not feel surprised... What made me surprised is that you can use this new magic can be actualized by **Alpha Stigma** bearers... I originally thought that among the magical eyes, the **Alpha Stigma** was not counted as one of the highest levels, but... it exceeded my expectations! The Alpha Stigma is really the most troublesome.”

Ryner heard him say that and replied:

“It doesn’t sound like a compliment.”

Sui’s expression stiffened when he heard that.

“Because I wasn’t praising you in the first place... I feel fearful. Fear towards a monster that cannot be estimated... After fighting with you, I experienced it for the first time. I completely understand, the reason why humans are unable to accept you.”

These words...

They did not make Ryner’s expression change.

Monster—

He already heard this sentence until he didn’t want to hear it anymore.

Eyes that caused fear and were seen as a taboo.

He was already accustomed to the eyes that received these views.

But, these words were actually lies.

This was something that couldn’t be accustomed to at all.

Every time he was called a monster by other people, he would be hurt.

Ryner looked at Arua.

Arua was grabbing Ryner’s clothes tightly as if begging...

When Ryner saw that, he smiled, and gently patted Arua’s head.

“But...”

Ryner stared at Arua and said:

“But, even so, we are still living. The ones who are scared the most are actually us. We have always felt fearful, we were always regretful that we lived... Always, always, always... fearing that we would hurt someone or kill them...”

But Sui continued:

“Even so, then shouldn’t you simply die? No, can you die for everyone? ... You are too hindering. Your power is too strong. And to us Gastark, you are a very big obstacle. This is the strongest fear that I have ever had in my life. Honestly speaking, even if we continuing to fight... I don’t think we will win. Who knows what kind of battle strategy you have prepared... With two to three, this situation is disadvantageous for us.”

Ryner smiled bitterly when he heard that.

“No, we aren’t fighting.”

He was lying.

In that week, so that they could fight with Sui and Kuu, he had started two other kinds of training with Arua.

Although he wasn’t sure who would win... but there was a chance of winning. In the beginning because they were not sure of the entire power of the scythe and the dagger stabbed in Sui’s arm, so they were a little uneasy...

If they were able to receive such an effect from the first fight, if it continued smoothly, they could probably win this fight.

Ryner thought.

Perhaps Sui had discovered that too?

“If possible, I don’t want to go against you already...”

He said.

Ryner replied:

“But... you can’t let us roam about freely? Then what do you want to do? Do you want to continue?”

But, Sui shook his head.

“No... we have to do what we don’t want to do. Kuu.”

He made a hand gesture, Kuu disappeared soundlessly and quickly into the corridor behind them...

Ryner spoke with half-opened eyes when he saw this:

“You’re taking Kuku as a hostage? But doing that is useless, right? If we die, Kuku would be killed anyway. Even so, we...”

But Sui shook his head when he heard this, taking out something that looked like a gem to show Ryner and the others...

“Remember this?”

Faced with that question...

“...”

Ryner did not answer.

Because of course he remembered.

Previously, Ryner’s **Alpha Stigma** had lost control because of these gems.

They seemed to have the ability to cause **Alpha Stigma** to lose control no matter what.

And...

“You shouldn’t be able to use that thing. You are unable to deal with my power when I lose control of the **Alpha Stigma**...”

Sui nodded when he heard that.

“We are indeed unable to deal with it. But...”

At this moment, Kuu returned.

She brought along a fainted Kuku.

The instant Arua saw Kuku...

“Kuku?! You, what did you do to Kuku...”

But, Sui replied:

“Nothing... we didn’t do anything. But, from your reaction... this move seems pretty effective.”

He said.

Effective.

When Ryner heard this...

“You.....Don’t tell me you’re thinking of...”

“That’s right, Ryner-san. If we can’t use the crystal to make you or that boy lose control... then, I will kill this girl, and make that boy collapse mentally.”

Saying that, Sui pulled Kuku over...

When Arua saw this, he said:

“No, no...”

His eyes widened.

This was the worse situation.

And facing this scene...

In an instant.

“Damn it!”

Ryner jumped out.

But...

“It’s too late.”

Sui said, raising the jaw of the dragon on his left arm, moving that mouth towards Kuku’s head...

“No, nooooooooooooooooooooooo!”

Arua shouted.

And, in the next moment, Kuku’s head...

There was a sound.

Blood spurted out before their eyes.

Ryner stopped his movement when he saw this.

Blood spurted out.

Blood spurted out.

It was an unbelievably large amount of blood...

And, the blood wasn’t from Kuku’s body.

The blood was spurting out from Sui’s shoulder.

No, not only his shoulder.

The area from his shoulder to his chest had been gouged out.

It was an odd scene.

In the previous moment he had discovered that the darkness behind Sui was rapidly swelling, in the next moment it had turned into the form of a beast and bit off the shoulder of Sui who was preparing to kill Kuku.

The beast disappeared into the darkness...

But, Sui looked at this with a disbelieving expression...

Then—

“Ah, uh,aaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhh?!”

He screamed.

Kuu trembled when she saw this. Kuu who would seem to lose all her feelings if she took up the scythe, was trembling uncontrollably at this instant.

“.....How can this..... How can this.....”

She immediately swung her scythe. She swung it towards Sui...

And, the blood pouring out from Sui’s shoulder stopped as it was frozen momentarily. But, although the blood was stopped, Sui’s injury was quite serious. He collapsed immediately...

“What, what was...th-that... earlier that... wasn’t that a Rhule Fragmei that was similar to Lir Nii-san’s...”

But, Ryner had seen this before.

The black beast that had eaten Sui’s shoulder.

That was...

At this moment, a voice sounded from the entrance to the villa. It was a cold voice.

“.....Rhule Fragmei... and, the Heroes’ Relics..... You have been talking about a few phrases that I do not understand...”

Ryner looked to the origin of the voice, seeing a man standing there.

Black, it was a man who was dressed head to toe in black, as if he wanted to merge into the darkness of the moonless night.

Miran Froaude. That was the name of this man.

They had fought before.

At that time he was aiming to kill the prince of the Nelpha king—Toale

Nelphi, and his brothers and sisters.

He could be an assassin from another country...

Ryner scowled when he saw this.

Sui and Kuu had appeared in Runa Empire...

And Froaude was acting from the shadows in Imperial Runa...

In addition Sui and Kuu were now attacked by Froaude...

It was clear that these two groups were from different camps.

That meant, at least two or more countries...had started to stir.

“.....Really, where is peace.....”

Ryner couldn't help but groan.

Due to Froaude's appearance, the situation was continuing to worsen. Before fighting, even if it were Ryner and Ferris fighting together... Ferris was still hurt severely; if they continued to fight at that moment, they would probably be killed.

This man's personality was worse than that of Sui and Kuu. This man had no conscience in killing people.

And...

His ability was so strong that it could not be gauged...

Ryner stepped back as he said:

“Ferris.”

He called. Ferris understood his meaning when she heard him.

They had to escape. Sui was hurt so badly, he probably couldn't move... but Kuu still had her scythe.

If they were attacked again by Froaude who could summon beasts of darkness... using the Ring of the Dark Emperor, then it would be even more

difficult for them to protect Arua...

Ferris moved secretly. She attempted to save Kuku who was in front of Sui and Kuu...

But, at this moment—

“.....Nii-san.....Nii-san.....”

Kuu protected Sui, her body was trembling. She completely ignored Froaude's presence.

As to Sui, perhaps he had lost too much blood? His vision seem to move around and was unable to settle...

“Ku...u, don't bother about me, escape. This situation is bad. If you bring me along, that guy.....”

“.....But.....But.....”

Kuu said with an emotionless expression.

At this moment... Froaude spoke:

“Ne.....Is it you? Are you the ones instigating Runa? You seem to have overdone things. Now I want you to pay the price.”

Saying that, he waved his hand.

He waved his hand with the ring.

In a moment, the black beasts started to swell again... towards Kuu...

But, Kuu still did not react. She only sat in front of Sui, stunned.

The darkness made to cover Kuu...

At this moment—

“.....Aaah, enough! What is this, what is this, really! – WHAT I SEEK IS THUNDER>>>IZUCHI!”

Ryner released magic involuntarily.

The lightning struck the black beast...

But, this was completely ineffective to the black beasts... But, they still stopped moving.

In a moment, Ferris moved...

She carried Kuku, and kicked Sui and Kuu's bodies, throwing them to the back of the corridor.

Then she told them:

“Hey, we’ll hold him off here for a while. Use that time to take Sui and escape.”

When Sui heard this, he had a surprised expression.

“Why...are you saving us? I want to kill you...”

But, Ferris didn’t look at Sui, she replied as she kept her guard on against Froaude:

“This is a debt you owe us. One day, we will look to you to return it.”

“...Doing such foolish things...again... Be careful of being tricked, and betrayed...”

But, Ferris interrupted him.

“I think so too. I’m really too nice. Doing this can’t save anything. It can’t save anyone or anything... this is something that children understand too. But, but Ryner... no, that man really doesn’t like people dying in front of him. Because that person is too weak. He hates people dying, and hates killing people... Even so, he still tries to save the world with his own method. He is the same as you. You are all idiots who really want to build a world where no one will lose anything... so, disappear quickly. If you stay here, Ryner will be unable to fight freely.”

Saying that, she pointed her sword at Froaude, readying herself.

“That shadow man... is too strong. We wouldn’t be able to fight with him and protect you...”

But, Sui’s face twisted when he heard this...

“.....Don’t tell me you’re really thinking.....”

He stopped talking at this point. Then he told Kuu:

“.....Kuu, we’ll retreat for today.”

Kuu nodded when she heard this, carrying Sui and standing...

But, Froaude said when he saw this:

“Don’t think you can escape...”

At this moment, Ryner started to draw a glowing magic structure again.

Seeing this. Froaude narrowed his eyes.

Then said:

“.....Hmm. Things...are hard to comprehend... I came here to kill the Gastark spies that infiltrated Runa. Then I heard a part of your conversation, although I only started listening from the middle... You two aren’t people from Gastark, right? You should be from Roland. But why do you want to protect the Gastark people? To you, those two should be obstacles...”

Ryner glared at Froaude when he heard this.

“We are different from you. Your style is wiping out all those who dare to obstruct your way. Repeating this behavior, what will it leave in the end?”

But, Froaude still had an uncomprehending expression.

“What will it leave? Hmm. A world that is peaceful and has no war... Unless you wish to hear this kind of answer? I don’t mind that either... To build a peaceful world that doesn’t have war, those two...”

“You wanted to interrogate them, to gain information, then kill them... right?

I wouldn't let you do that."

In that period of time, Kuu carried Sui and ran along the corridor. She waved her scythe, destroying the wall of the villa, and jumped out through the hole...

But, Froaude didn't chase after them...

"..."

As if contemplating about something, he crossed his arms, not speaking...

He was completely unguarded. He clearly knew that Ryner was drawing a magic structure, and Ferris was preparing her sword to fight...

But even so, he still said softly:

".....Under this situation, allowing the Gastark people to escape... The Heroes' Relic... Rhule Fragmei... What is His Majesty..."

After he mumbled strangely for a while, he suddenly turned his back to Ryner and the others, making to leave from the entrance of the villa...

Ryner couldn't help but say:

"Eh? Ah, wait... you're returning without fighting?"

Froaude turned back when he heard that.

"I don't think that there is a need to fight you. But, I see. You are from Roland... I see..."

For some reason, he said with a seemingly troubled bitter smile.

Ryner said:

"Which country's assassin are you? Since you aren't fighting with us, that means you're from a country that isn't related to us Roland? What's the problem in telling us?"

Hearing that...

Froaude had an even more troubled expression. Then...

“One day...”

But, he shook his head when he said that, then continued:

“No, after today I might deal with you for a long time, so I should tell you?”

“Eh? Deal with us for a long time...? You’re saying...”

Ryner asked.

But Froaude ignored him, continuing:

“I belong to Stohl. The military country Imperial Stohl. Do you know of it?”

Ryner heard that:

“Eh, ah, what nonsense are you speaking of? Isn’t that a large country in the north? I see... Stohl... Unheeding of the effort, coming from such a far place to the southern countries?”

Froaude smiled bitterly when heard this.

“Gastark is even further up north.”

“Eh? Really?”

Ryner replied. After Froaude organized his thoughts he said:

“That, perhaps I am bothering too much, but can you listen to a piece of advice from me?”

“Eh? Advice?”

Froaude nodded. Then said:

“You asked me earlier... what will be left from killing people who obstruct my path. If I were to be honest, that would be—if people who are obstructions are destroyed, then it would leave a world that is very convenient to me. If it is from the view of an Alpha Stigma bearer like you,

killing all the people, can lead to a world that is suitable for Alpha Stigma bearers to live in... That is the truth, isn't it? People are animals that have to fight to survive. To eat, to protect their reputation, to live a life better than other people, to protect the people that they love...

And to avoid being killed by someone...

People have to fight.

Not sacrificing, and where everyone can laugh happily and live out their days... that is a joke. There is no such existence of such a world. The world isn't so simple as you imagined. Take the time when you haven't experienced troubles..."

At that point, he stopped...

"No... You are an **Alpha Stigma** bearer... You should be very clear about the ugliness of human nature. This is really an advice of me bothering too much. Then, I will—retreat here."

Saying that, Froaude made to leave the villa again...

But Ryner spoke at this moment:

"Ah, wait. What does that mean? I still dislike you. But... This time we were saved by you. You saved Kuku. Thank you."

Hearing that...

Froaude stopped again, but he didn't turn back...

"You really thought that I saved that girl?"

"...Uh, I don't think so, but... that chance was really the time where Sui made the largest mistake. Even so..."

Then Froaude turned back again.

Staring at Ryner, he frowned.

"...How regrettable."

He said.

“...One day, I will probably still kill you... Your existence is really...”

But, Froaude only spoke that much, then he stepped forward again.

And after his figure vanished from the villa...

Ryner said:

“Ne, Ferris... did I say anything to make him angry?”

But Ferris replied:

“Hmm. This is a difficult question. It’s been revealed, the matter of your existence, you yourself is on the list for making people angry...”

“Ahh, yes yes, I have dominated the first place for several centuries!”

Ferris was stopped before she finished talking.

At this moment Arua shouted:

“Kuku!! Kuku?!”

He shouted as he ran forward.

Perhaps it was a reaction to his voice? Kuku opened her eyes slightly...

“Ah, Arua?!”

She shouted, hugging Arua tightly.

Ferris spoke suddenly when she saw this:

“Hey, stop acting romance scenes when you’re still young. If you always do that, people may think you’re as useless as that perverted Onii-san.”

She said some strangely words cleanly, Kuku and Arua laughed when they heard this...

At this moment, the sun rays were slowly starting to shine in through the window...

The darkness of the night was already starting to retreat.

The darkness outside was slowly chased away...

Ryner narrowed his eyes when he saw the sunlight.

“Ah, and it’s even day break... We stayed up for the whole night again...”

He moaned with a tired voice.

Then, Ryner laughed.

Ferris was continuously teaching some bad things about Ryner to Kuku and Arua in front of him...

Ryner laughed when he saw this.

The sky slowly brightened.

The sunlight shone in strongly.

The darkness was chased away.

The lonely darkness...

Looking at Arua, Kuku and Ferris, for some reason, at this moment Ryner felt the lonely darkness disappear completely, disappearing to some unknown place.

Ryner thought...

Even if this is a momentary lie, it is enough for now...

Prologue 2- still, they cannot return to the past

Someone's ideals.

Someone's dreams.

Someone's love.

Someone's joy.

Everyone wanted him to grant these things.

He wanted to reply to every requests.

He wanted to gain everything from this.

But, one day, he found that that was not possible.

No, he realized, actually everything was not possible.

Even so, he still fought on.

Perhaps there is still some possibility.

Perhaps it can still be done.

It can be done, can be done, can be done, can be done...

He continued to reply.

He responded to a large pressure, desire.

And ideals...

He continued to respond.

He responded as if he were mad...

It can be done, can be done...

In this period, Sion was really very busy.

There were changes to his decrees.

On one hand he had to skillfully handle the response that the nobles had to these measures... at the same time on the Estabul side there were many things that had to be dealt with.

The things that he had to do were piling up.

Claugh and Noa were headed to Estabul to gather talented people, Calne and Eslina were busy too... This time there was almost no one who came to his office for personal business.

Sion himself wasn't any better off. These days, he was almost unable to sleep at night, frantically arranging all the files and matters that had not been dealt with.

“Huu...”

He sighed in the office.

Pressing a hand to his slightly aching head.

“Ah, this is bad. If I don't sleep for a while... and continue, my efficiency will drop...”

He murmured, leaning up, looking at the ceiling.

The pure white ceiling.

Actually, the office itself was a simple room that was painted in white. Apart from this room, the other places were a little over-decorated, and lacked a serious atmosphere.

He sat on the chair of this simple room, and closed his eyes.

...In his heart, he thought if someone saw this...

“Fiole will be angry again...”

But, he was still unable to sleep.

As long as he closed his eyes, several matters that urgently needed pondering over flashed across his mind...

Especially the movements of the other countries, that was the problem that gave him the most trouble so far.

Froaude had not returned from Runa.

Originally he only on a mission to greet the king...

Did something bad happen? Or did he find some important information...

Not only that. Even the neighbouring Nelpha was giving off an unstable atmosphere, and it wasn't dissipating any time soon.

According to reports, the country had some nobles gathering together, attempting to raise a revolution.

The reason for the revolution was probably as other countries were strengthening their armies, the Runa king said that they didn't plan to increase their military forces, and this instigated the nobles to rebel. The nobles' reason was this—the world was already changing, why is our country not keeping up?

The nobles of Runa were different from Roland's. They really were concerned for their country... Because they were worried for Runa's future, so they decided to rebel.

And—

“...If there is a revolution, and a new king ascends... then the friendship between Roland and Runa as of now will become a blank piece of paper...”

Sion said softly.

At that time, one day...

No...

Sion opened his eyes again, looking at the ceiling.

The white, empty ceiling that made him feel empty. The ceiling slowly darkened as night came. Unknowingly, the sun had started to set. Sion looked in the direction of the window...

“...It seems that I have to light the lamp...”

He said softly, but didn’t make any movements.

The room slowly darkened, the white ceiling was gradually covered with darkness...

Even so, Sion was unmoving.

A dark, simple room.

In the darkness, Sion looked at the ceiling alone.

“.....One day, will we... fight with Runa and Nelpha?”

He said with an emotionless voice.

One day when war erupted, many people would die.

And an unbelievably large number of people would die...

In order to prevent this from happening, Sion was working hard now. He sent Froaude to Runa to threaten them... on the other hand he was building up a good relationship with Nelpha.

He admitted that he had used all his strength.

But, the world was still going against his will.

Continuously making fun of him—

Killing...

Killing...

Someone said before—

He wanted to live in a world where there was no war, where everyone could laugh and live every day.

He carried this person's ideals, and admitted that he was working hard with all his might.

Someone said before—

He wanted a world where everyone would not lose their important things, and have afternoon naps every day...

He carried this person's ideals, and admitted that he was working hard with all his might.

Someone's love.....

Someone's joy.....

Someone's hope.....

Because someone requested him to do these things.....

So.....

He wanted to respond to all these requests.

He wanted to gain everything from here.

And, one day, he found that that was impossible.

No, he discovered that everything was impossible.

Despair expanded before his eyes.

Even so, he didn't give up and continued fighting.

There should be some possibility.

--He had thought.

There should be some hope.

--He had prayed.

It still can be done, it still can be done, it still can be done, it still can be done.....

He continued to reply.

He responded to the uncountable large pressure and desire.

There are still ideas...

He continued to respond.

He responded as if he were mad.

It still can be done, it still can be done.....

Even if the world is about to collapse...

It still can be done.....

Because we already promised.

Because it is a promise with that person.....

Even if the way I'm going about it is not right.....

But I cannot admit defeat.

Sion slowly reached out.

He reached out to the ceiling illuminated by the weak light.

But the light...

The sun outside had sank below the mountains...

“.....I have to light...the lamps...”

Sion murmured softly again.

The scene changed to the villa of a Runa noble.

Ryner and the others were still there.

Everyone was hungrily eating in the kitchen beside the dining hall, extremely extravagant food stuff, and even foods that they had never eaten before, they ate it all up...

“It’s veeeery yuummy! Oh no, I haven’t eaten such good food in a while, I’m clearly full, but I can’t stop!”

Ryner shouted, continuously gobbling the cuisine... or it should be called food.

Arua and Ferris were eating their favourite cuisine beside him.....

The only exception was Kuku.

“Ah, Arua, we haven’t seen each other in a few days, you seem to have become stronger...”

She said with a surprised expression.

Arua heard that.

“Ah? Is, it that so? But, it’s great that Kuku is fine... Aaaaaaaahhhh, sensei! That’s my meat! I wanted to leave that till the end...”

But Ryner said:

“Hahaha, it’s your fault for not guarding your food. If you don’t properly practice eating the most you can when you can eat... when we have the twenty-hours long sleeping competition later, you’ll be unable to sleep because you’re too hungry.”

He said these strange things... Ferris immediately got back at him.

“He’s the model of the Idiot-sama that you should never follow, Arua. You

have to ignore everything he says after today. Understand?”

Arua nodded.

“Yes!”

“You still replied yes...”

Ryner immediately retorted. Arua laughed. Then said:

“That.....Sensei, I have something to ask you...”

Ryner heard that, and stopped eating. He raised his head and asked:

“Eh? What is it?”

Arua had a serious expression as he said:

“It’s about the future... I want to follow sensei after today...”

But Ryner immediately replied:

“Nope. Bringing children along for the trip is troublesome... Just protecting that troublesome explosive brat is bad enough... Ferris!! Don’t throw the serving plates... Ah, I told you not to take the knife...”

Saying that, he turned back to look at Arua.

“Uh, but, I think you and Kuku, and Kuku’s parents will have a hard time continuing to live in Runa. So, do you want to move to Roland?”

Arua’s eyes widened when he heard this.

“Eh? Ro, Roland? The one in the south...?”

“Yeah, I know the king of that country. Uh, I think you’ll be quite well off there.”

Arua and Kuku hearing that, exchanged looks...

Arua said:

“That is...good, but...I want to stay with sensei, so I can become stronger...”

But, Ryner interrupted him.

“You can become strong in Roland.”

“But...”

At this point, Ryner stared at Arua.

“I say, Arua, have you forgotten why you want to become stronger?”

“Eh?”

“You said, you want to become strong to save Kuku. Now, are you planning to separate from Kuku? Leaving Kuku alone in Roland...?”

“But...”

Arua stopped again...

Ryner laughed.

“Right? You can only go to Roland, right? Because men are like that, they are tied up tightly by women.”

At this moment Ferris nodded and said:

“But, low, horrible people who attack women everywhere, and not taking responsibility still exist...”

At this point Kuku continued:

“Ah, Ferris Onee-san, this kind of people are called useless men, right?”

“Um. You remembered it well. I’ll reward you properly later.”

“Great!”

This conversation sounded familiar, Ryner grabbed his head in pain.

“I say, Ferris...don’t teach the children these kind of things...”

“Huh? But this is something essential for their survival? I remember a book wrote, as long as they form a relationship with useless men, women would be

doomed for life.”

Ferris said firmly, Ryner replied sadly:

“I just said, why is your knowledge always so biased...Ah, never mind, na, it’s like that, in a few days, I will ask someone to bring you to Roland. Eh, let’s ask Iris... Ah, she’s Ferris’s little sister? Let’s ask Iris to bring you back...or...”

At this moment, he frowned.

Because he thought of a more suitable person to bring Arua and Kuku back...

It was a girl called Milk Callaud.

Because of the king’s deliberate evil arrangement, the girl who belonged to the Roland army, had strangely taken Ryner as a **Taboo Breaker** and was hunting him down.

Perhaps it was because in the past, they had lived together in the same orphanage...

For some reason, she actually shouted! We said that we’d get married back then! As she chased after him...

“...Uh, I think those people are reaching soon... How do they know of our location every time...”

One reason was clear.

It must be that the king had told them. When Ryner thought of that, his frown deepened.

“Ah, that bastard king... He’s taking me as a toy... next time I see him, I will have to punch him hard. But, anyway, it should be no problem for us to pass this task to them? Runa is an allied country too, those people should be able to bring Arua and them to Roland safely?”

Ferris heard that.

“Uh. You said those people, are you referring to the woman that you used marriage as bait, and then after playing with her, abandoned her?”

“I’m saying I didn’t do any of that at all...”

But, Ferris completely ignored Ryner’s explanation, and started to talk nonsense to Kuku again.

“Urgh, she’s not listening at all... Ah, never mind... Ne, it’s like that, Arua.”

Saying that, he looked at Arua.

And, he found that, Arua’s face still had the expression that was filled with his desire to stay with Ryner and the others...

Ryner laughed bitterly and said:

“...Ah, how clingy. You really want to follow us?”

And, Arua nodded forcefully a few times, then...

“Is it not possible?”

But Ryner shrugged.

“Uh, travelling in other countries is very dangerous. Anyway, we seem to have had an increase in enemies... I have to be everywhere at once, I can’t protect you.”

Arua heard that, and he had a sad face.

Ryner laughed. He laughed really happily.

“Ah, it’s not like we won’t see each other forever. Don’t reveal that sort of expression! As long as I have the heart, one day, I will return to Roland too... Before I return, you should live your days happily. You have to become strong, at least you have to be able to protect Kuku herself... Ne, when you become very strong, then I will want you to protect me to...”

But, at this moment Ferris interrupted from the side forcefully, and told Arua:
“So didn’t I tell you, ignore what that man is saying?”

Followed by Kuku saying:

“Yes, Arua. That brother seems to be a convict that is an extreme pervert? It’s scary. You definitely can’t approach him...”

Arua heard this, and asked:

“Eh? Is, is that true? Sensei?!”

He actually asked that...

For some reason, Ferris stood there, and looked at Ryner with a victorious expression.

Ryner seeing that...

“You believe her? You’re believing her words so easily?Ah, forget it, it doesn’t matter.....Anyway, live well in Roland...Eh.”

Ryner said with a slightly sad tone.

The starting of the report was like this!

People don’t like death.

And they don’t like to kill.

They don’t like to cry helplessly, and they don’t like to cry without a reason.

What is the feeling of being unable to choose your own life?

What is the feeling of having your family die?

What is the emotional state of having your favourite person die?

No one wants to face this, but why does the world laugh and greedily desire for such meaningless grief?

They never thought of forcefully changing things.

But, not changing, always avoiding sadness, and not wanting to lose anything anymore...

It sounds a little troublesome, but...

It's time to move on. We've deliberately avoided facing this problem head on, but, if necessary, then try to face your past head on!

At the same time—

So as to have a world where no one would lose anyone or anything.

A world where that girl, Kiefer will never cry, Tyle, Toni and Fahl wouldn't die, Sion would not have to face a situation where any choice presents him with troubles.

Let's progress to a world where everyone can laugh happily, where it is possible to sleep from day to night.

Ryner Lute.

“Ryner Lute...”

After reading that report, Froaude softly uttered.

“A world where no one will lose anything...”

Froaude continued to look at the information that the subordinate had gathered.

The information about a girl called Milk Callaud who was chasing after Ryner Lute who was a **Taboo Breaker**.

And the information of the team members.

Luke Stokkart.

Lear Rinkal.

Lach Velariore.

Moe Velariore.

Among them the most noticeable name was Luke Stokkart.

He was a talented person who had experienced the revolution with Sion Astal and Claugh Krom.

How strange. This man called Luke Stokkart, had a large achievement that wouldn't make it strange for him to have the Field Marshal position with Claugh; and, he had that kind of power. But, this man became the subordinate of this girl called Milk Callaud, and went out of the country, chasing Ryner Lute.

And although it was chasing, that was only a name, they didn't really seem to want to catch the criminal.

That was obvious. Because both sides were moving according to the king's orders.

Then, if that was the case, why was there a need to have such an act?

“...”

Froade looked at the report Ryner Lute wrote again.

It was a report that was filled with dreams, as if it were a fake story.

Froade narrowed his eyes.

“...A leash... Milk Callaud is the leash on Ryner Lute? To prevent Ryner Lute from leaving Roland... No, from leaving Sion Astal... To limit his leash...and to control it is Luke Stokkart.”

Saying that, he took out a dagger. That was a dagger that was made from an inorganic material, snatched from the Gastark assassin called Sui, which was recorded in the report.

He twirled that dagger.

“...The Heroes’ Relics... Rhule Fragmei...”

Froaude twirled that dagger again and again.

“...Building a peaceful world where there is no killing...”

He twirled the dagger again.

“...The leash that limits Ryner Lute... that is the king’s weakness... the fear of Ryner Lute leaving him...”

He twirled it again.

“...The ideal world that Ryner Lute wishes for, where no one dies, or gets hurt, or feels sad, and the ideal king... that is the chain tying down Sion Astal...”

Then, Froaude threw the dagger...

He continued to mutter.

“...But that will ruin His Majesty. The ideal king responding to everyone’s expectations. That illusion will destroy people, and the king... It seems that there is a need to erase. Ryner Lute...”

He stood up.

“No, it should be starting from eradicating that leash?”

He said.

Afterword

I apologize for the wait everyone had.

What are your feelings for the fifth volume of “the Legend of the Legendary Heroes”?

It seems like all the big and small characters have appeared, the pace at which this story will expand will increase greatly.

I have prepared several developments that will make everyone surprised, so please look forward to it!

Speaking with so much satisfaction is not good, but it wasn't easy writing this work.

I should say, writing the legends of the heroes has always been hard work.

For this reason, let me talk about this time's legendary heroes.

Why is it so hard writing the legendary heroes? That's because the magic structure, views and politics of every country is different, and some parts are developing at the same pace in the short stories...

The most important reason is here—

There are too many main characters. To deal with the emotions of every character is a very hard task.

Perhaps it's because of war, conspiracies, lust, it makes it seems as if the world is messed up? Everyone's burden is too heavy, so I myself feel that I can't describe it with a half-hearted style...

But, if I write it realistically, the story would be too gloomy, so I made some edits when writing, so that the readers wouldn't feel that the content is losing balance, and seem to be too dark.

If I write a gloomy story... or I should say, completely follow a strict fashion,

perhaps the content may gain praise because of its realistic view...

But most entertainment works can't be written this way, right?!

At this moment, I had a deep revelation.

Ah, why are you so agitated?

If someone asked me that, I would really feel apologetic. (Laughs)

Can we continue with this topic? It's alright? Never mind, I'll continue.

Let us continue.

So, what we have to discuss—what is reality? At the same time, let me tell you, when writing, one thing you have to notice is, do not let the story expand 'randomly'.

But, what is called reality, doesn't it seem like it's very random sometimes?

"Ah, there's no such thing"—sometimes the story's content will let people feel this way, then, if it's very interesting because of this, and use it in this novel...

The readers will say this:

"Ah, something like that will never happen. Doesn't this seem random?"

Then, under this restriction, doesn't it mean in the novel the true meaning of reality can't be written out? No, it should be said such content can't be written?

In this way, writing a novel has become something that is a work with truth... or a war against reality?

Let's bring the topic back to the legend of the heroes...

The background of the legend of the heroes is a world engulfed in war. If you read carefully, you will find that, in truth these works are talking about dark sides of matters. So, many characters have their own troubles.

That trouble will sometimes be overwhelming, and even seem to be real...

But, I want to save it.

Because I believe, in the real world, there are happy things, but there are also things that make people unhappy, isn't that so? So, even if it is a novel, manga, movie, music, anything is fine... as long as it is something that is entertaining, it should let people momentarily forget about these unhappy matters...

Because I wish that the readers will be able to forget unhappy things, even if it is only for a moment, it is a success...

So, I want to rescue.

I don't want to write things that are filled with reality and darkness.

So, when I'm writing, I have to take extra notice of the balancing problem, to prevent the content from becoming too gloomy...

Bu—ut—

The characters in the legend of the heroes!

I think people who have read the novels should understand. (Laughs)

To me, of course I wish that my writing will make everyone satisfied, something that can make the readers feel happy...

And, the progress after today... will become harder to clear up...

Urgh.

Because when I am writing I will simultaneously transfer my own feelings to every character, so in the end I'm so tired that I don't even seem like a person.

If you ask me how much am I not like a person... Every time I finish writing a work, my originally taut nerves will snap, the next day because of intestinal illness I will be in bed. (Tears)

Just two days ago, an author forwarded an email:

“It’s terrible! Food poisoning from oyster!”

It seemed pretty serious. At that time I thought, the deadline for manuscript is reaching, I have to take care of my health.

Then I thought:

“Could the intestinal illness virus have been spread from that email...?”

Reality is even stranger than novels. It’s really random, it can’t be the material for novels... (Laughs)

Ah, returning to the topic, there is an important notice now.

Or I should say it’s an apologetic notification.

In the previous volume of “The Legend of the Legendary Heroes 4”, there were some huge mistakes in some places, I will correct them here.

First, in the afterword, the voice actress who is in charge of Ferris in the drama disc is Takagaki Ayahi, her name Ayahi is written in hiragana.

I’m really sorry. I wrote it wrongly.

Following that—on page nine, originally it should be written as Clauth, but I accidentally wrote it as Sion.

For that I apologize. That this kind of mistake happened, its severity is bad enough that it makes people question—“Why did this things happen!?”

Lastly, page two hundred and seven, originally it should be Runa soldiers, but I mistakenly wrote it as Nelpha soldiers...

Ah...I’m really sorry. The next publication will be corrected. I’m really sorry.

I will work harder after today, and make sure such mistakes do not happen, please do take care of me.

If I write like this, will anyone read the previous four volumes all over again?

If another mistake is found, then I will really be guilty.

Ah, really, why did such a mistake appear... aaaaaahhhh....

So, that, this, urgh...

Lastly let's talk about the progress of the legend of the heroes...

Eh. In truth when I handed in the final manuscript for the fifth volume of the legend of the heroes, it had been completely past the deadline.

This is because, the schedule for this book is very tight... I frantically wrote this book with tears in my eyes every day.

In truth, the writing schedule for the previous work was also very tight, perhaps the tight schedule caused the incidents so far... this time the time was so tight that I nearly wanted to give up, my emotions were really brittle...

Just like that, the manuscript was completed.

I had gone past the deadline.

Handing the manuscript in late caused much trouble for everyone. Especially my editor M-san and the illustrator Toyota-san, I caused much trouble for them.

But...

The night I completed the manuscript and passed it to M-san, I immediately received Toyota-san's email!

"I think you have been working hard, good luck! It's fine! Kagami-san isn't alone!!"

I wanted to cry!

I was a little touched.

No, really, this letter had given me much help.

In the past it was emails that were filled with curses... But this time, it nearly made me gasp! Is she a goddess?!

Perhaps it has connection to us sticking through all this way since the year end? Following that I immediately collapsed on the bed because of the intestinal disease... In truth, the deadline next week for the short stories for the legend of the heroes has been exceeded a long time ago. I believe, the editor in charge of me M-san must be very anxious. I am not clear on the process of the editorial side, but... I know, he has been very supportive of me in various areas, looking after me, until the very end.

I didn't think M-san would say:

“Rest well first, look after your body. Your health is most important... The manuscript can wait till a later date.”

And after that he didn't even mention about the manuscript, and he called every day to ask me about my health, worrying that there was no one to look after me...

I really feel, I am not alone.

Just like that, I rested for two days. In the mean time I took out my fans' letters to read.

And...

How should I say? Thinking about how the legend of the heroes was successfully created because of such care and concern from people, my tears nearly rolled out.

So, I want to say, thank you, everyone!

I seem to be saying the same thing, but this is my genuine feeling.

Everyone really gave me a lot of help.

I'm really grateful!

I will work harder after today, please continue to support me!!

Like this, we will meet quickly next time!

That will be when the short stories for the legend of the heroes is published.

“El-Win” is also popular in the market’s list, the number of books published this year will be more than that seen, please keep up, everyone!

Then, I will end off here.

Kagami Takaya

Please continue to give us your support.

Translator's Notes

Chapter 3

Seirei

↑ Seirei (精靈) is a very broad term in Japanese referring to spirits, souls, ghosts, and even sprites or faeries, though the later is more often termed Yousei(妖精) rather than Seirei. Briefly quoting from the Japanese wiki, the same kanji when read as Shouryou, Shourai, Shourou, generally refers to spirits of dead people, or ancestors, or respected figures of worship (historical figure or ancestors elevated to deity status). When read as Seirei (as in the novel), it refers to 'imported' spirits which have origins outside of Japan. This can include spirits from Western cultures and religions, such as the Holy Spirit as an example, or other Eastern cultures (China, India, etc.), elemental spirits, foreign faeries/sprites, etc. etc.

As what Ryner had mentioned, this is mostly a 'term' used by Roland magic academics to define the golden particles(粒子) which exist throughout the world, and do not resemble spirits of any sort. From hereon, the term 'Seirei' will be used without modification when it is used as 'magic jargon', and a link will be used to link the term back to the relevant segment in chapter 5 of DYD.

